

Line up

Shahryar Nashat

17th April - 27th June 2010

In his photographic, sculptural, and film works, the Swiss artist Shahryar Nashat (b. 1975, lives in Berlin) is concerned with questions relating to forms of presentation immanent in art. "Line up" — the title of the exhibition already gives a sense that sequence is one of the important criteria. The objects shown are inspired by the respective display medium; they are reduced to the individual presentational format itself, such as the plinth, rod, or glass cabinet. The set up of the artwork becomes thus the actual object. Questions relating to the presentation of art in its respective era are therefore inherent, indelibly properties within this overall framework.

Deconstruction and reconstruction play an important role in all of the works by this young Swiss artist of Persian origin. He links one of the exhibition rooms with the hall by a long row of sculptures. Nashat runs through the full gamut of pedestal and object formats in this sequence. The pedestal base plates, for example, in which elegant and erotic rods of brass have been embedded, themselves represent the object (of desire). The idea of subtracting the figure itself is not only visible here, but also in the new mirror sculptures as well as the photographic works for which the artist uses representations of nude male figures taken from different epochs against coloured backgrounds. By removing of the upper section of the image, information about the overall bodily expression is boldly disrupted and defamiliarised. The absence of the upper section notwithstanding, cultural attribution, expressivity, and overall pose are clearly legible.

Shahryar Nashat has ultimately facilitated the transference of museum conditions by restaging a whole room: he was invited two years ago to work with the collection belonging to the Kunsthaus Zurich. He asked the then director Dr. Christoph Becker to describe the room to him. Using the list of works in this text, he created a sound-based artwork. Instead of the paintings from a room in the Kunsthaus Zurich, it was possible to hear this piece as well as see the ambience created by two red spots matching the red carpet in the museum. This work was subsequently acquired by the Kunsthaus, then reborrowed from the collection and installed in abstract form. In this way, along with the atmospheric situation in the room, both the voice of the museum director and the original labels in Nuremberg, facilitate the transference of this installation.

Questions relating to the arrangement of cultural objects and their meaning are also presented in the film "One more time with James" (2009): two businessmen are trying out perfumes in a New York department store. Ultimately, after the money has changed hands, the figures of the men are replaced by exclusive perfume bottles, so that only the object of desire—or rather the aura it emanates—for the world of commodities is presented.

Desirability and fetishisation are not evoked solely by forms of presentation. A salient quality of Nashat's artwork is the fact the body, or the human being per se, becomes measure of everything, with the effect that both artist and viewer play an important role in his work.

Shahryar Nashat studied at the Ecole Supérieure des Beaux-Art in Geneva and at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. In 2005, he represented Switzerland at the 51st Venice Biennial. In recent years he has staged a number of solo exhibitions, for example in 2009 at the Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, as well as the Brandenburgischer Kunstverein in Potsdam, as well as at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK. He recently took part in an exhibition (at Silberkuppe's invitation) in exhibitions at the Kunsthall Bergen, the Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Basel, as well as the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden. Nashat's works were also exhibited in Germany recently as part of the show "Scorpio's Garden" (at the invitation of Kirstine Roepstorff, 2009) in the temporary Kunsthalle in Berlin.

The very first monograph on Shahryar Nashat's work will be published by the Sternberg press in Autumn 2010 in tandem with the exhibition and in conjunction with the Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen. Warm thanks are owed for the sponsorship and distinction of the exhibition and the catalogue by:



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