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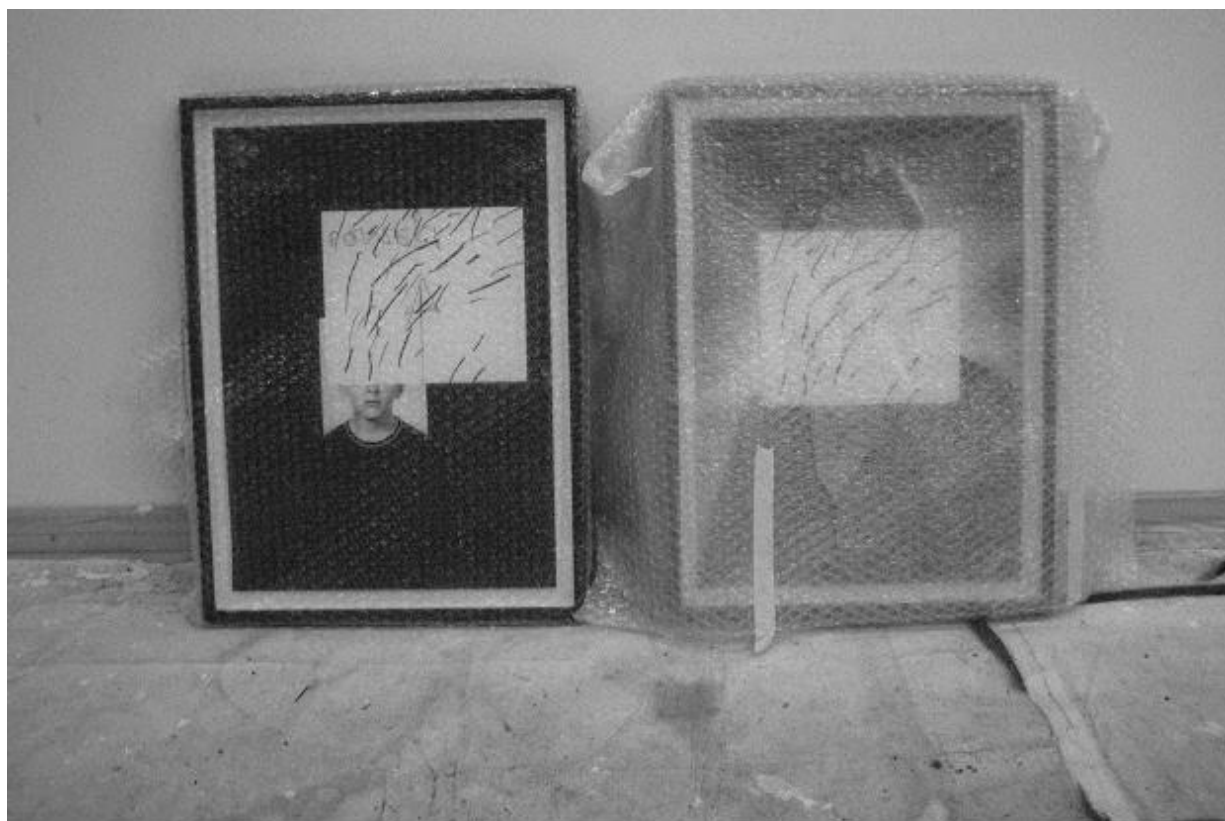
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COLOGNE: INTERVIEW WITH DAVID OSTROWSKI

BY ANNA-LENA WERNER

A creepily empty building at Mediapark in Cologne, modern glass-architecture, bored reception girls and hidden, yet just in between: David Ostrowski and his studio. A young, critical painter who owns many spray cans and a massive pile of his favourite art-magazines: The French 'Vogue' and the German 'Gala'. The modest and extremely humorous Cologne-born already had exhibitions in many places of world, from L.A. to Helsingor, but he rather prefers to romanticise his charming hometown at the river Rhine. I have known David for a long time and still - when it comes to his art there is something mysterious about him. And I believe he likes to keep it that way - as if he would say: Why don't you find out yourself? Anyway, as we giggled our way through the interview, David told me about his most interesting approach to his art. You can read the English translated- and the German original version of the interview below after the click...









(translated interview)

Anna-Lena Werner: Do you work at night, or during the day?

David Ostrowski: I paint most beautifully at night.

A: What is your most recent picture's content?

D: Mistakes. In the series of works titled 'F', or the painting 'Even the most beautiful woman ends at her feet' ('Auch die schönste Frau ist an den Füßen zu Ende') I try to provoke painting- or spray mistakes, for instance by working very fast. I like to call those series 'mistake painting.' (Fehlermalerei)

A: Is this why you call them F?

D: (laughs) Maybe.

A: Or will there be a series of works from A to E?

D: Maybe. Sometimes the title is already there before-, and sometimes it emerges while I am painting. For me, the titles of my works seem coherent. As a balance, I used to give bad works good titles in past. Today, I still do it the same way. (laughs)

A: Why are you so fascinated by mistakes?

D: The compound, pictorial faux pas are supposed to create a beautiful picture. I intend to approach painting in a naive way. As a right-hander, for instance, I try to paint with my right hand, as if it was my left. This is a way to let things happen that I couldn't estimate beforehand. As I unfortunately have to think quite a lot, I try to switch off well-considered processes of painting, as to then skilfully employ them

in the name of beauty.

A: Is it important for you that your paintings turn out to be beautiful?

D: Yes, it even has highest priority. The works need to be beautiful, because otherwise I couldn't bare them.

A: Do you already know right at the beginning of your painting-process how it's going to look?

D: It's always the same: once the white, empty canvas stands right in front of me I think 'hopefully this is going to be the best work in the world.' It's a constant failure. For me it's important that I like the work in the end – however, I just never know how to wangle that beforehand. I permanently consider adding, or omitting details during the process of painting. At one point I usually believe that a piece of work is done. But sometimes I am not sure and then I have the painting rest and maturate – just as a wine in a basement – until my mood decides whether it's done, or not. Sometimes I simply repaint the work again.

A: Are you against the virtuosity of artists?

D: Far from it! The more virtuous the better!

A: What does the comic foot, which appears in many of your recent works, represent?

D: I wanted to paint beautiful feet and I believe it succeeded.

A: Some years ago you painted the figurative work 'God bless these tootsies' (Gott segne diese Füßchen).

D: Yes, I do have a foot-fetish.

A: And now you paint clubfeet?

D: Thank you!

A: How important is the audience's reaction for you?

D: I am happy about every positive reaction.

A: Does your work contain a lot of humour?

D: No. (laughs)

A: Are you self-critical?

D: I am generally critical.

A: You are part of many group exhibitions. Are you a good team worker?

D: I do enjoy working with people, whose work I appreciate. Though, I don't know if I am a good team worker.

A: Who are the heads of the curatorial group '1981er' that you are a part of?

D: They are malicious and ugly people, who don't have a clue about anything and my humble self.

A: You have been studying at the Art Academy in Düsseldorf under Professor Albert Oehlen. How do

you remember that time?

D: Hence my studio was located in Cologne – and this was the place where I predominantly worked – I really enjoyed visiting my colleagues at the academy. Additionally, my Professor was happy to make trips to my studio in Cologne, as to look at my new works and discuss them with me.

A: What is your opinion on the German academy system, in comparison to other countries, where art students have more than one teacher?

D: I am unfamiliar with that topic, but one teacher was definitely enough for me.

A: The English are often sceptical of the German academy system, because they doubt that graduates can get rid of their Professor-label. It could boost a career, but it could also mean that one remains in the master's shadow. What do you think?

D: I am always in my big nose's shadow.

A: You are a real Cologne-born. Have you never toyed with the idea of moving, for instance, to Berlin?

D: I am fond of Cologne. The city is unpretentious – not exactly a beauty, but it has many nice locations. Of course, the carnival is really annoying, but I was born and raised here; and I feel affiliated with the city. I really enjoy being here, living here and coming back here. My work is not influenced by where I live. The work that I am doing right now would probably look the same elsewhere. I like to travel, to see, to discover new things – and Cologne functions as a good basis.

A: What is your favourite spot in Cologne?

D: Südstadt.

A: And your favourite spot in Düsseldorf?

D: Oberkassel.