

Dani Gal

Hegemon

3/17-4/29/2017

Dani Gal's sound, film and slide installations manipulate the original narrative logic and address the difference between the "truth" of collective memory conveyed by media and subjective feelings. Many of Gal's performances and elaborately produced films are based on the re-enactment of an political events by professional actors, like the film "Nacht und Nebel" shown at the 54th Biennale in Venice. Dani Gal's specific way of dealing with oral narration is also reflected in his collection of long-playing records with historical speeches of the most various politicians and radio broadcasts now comprising more than 500 records. Not seldom combined with the propaganda of dictatorial regimes, these kinds of records were a popular medium up until the 1980s for disseminating political and historical contents.

For Dani Gal's new film "Hegemon," the gallery will be converted into a movie theater. "Hegemon" documents different perspectives on strategies and history of American foreign policy. The 80-minute film was shot in Washington in 2015/16 and gains significance in view of the current political situation. For the film, eleven foreign policy experts from think tanks, the military, and the CIA describe their view of American foreign policy. The conversations deal with issues such as Islam, the arms industry, American-led wars, cybersecurity, and the concept of freedom. At the same time, one sees scenes of "ordinary" daily life in Washington filmed by Dani Gal. The view of the camera is completely "non-hierarchical" and equally concentrates on urban monuments, nature, and people, as opposed to the usual "iconic" representations of the American capital in the media. The combination of the contrasting interviewees and their opinions with the unspectacular images of everyday life in Washington creates a focus on how truth is "made." Is America a hegemonic power or an empire in decline? During the shooting, a special device recorded electromagnetic fields that Dani subtly mixed into the individual scenes and that serve as filmic metaphors of the "hidden forces that generate what is called 'American power'."



Hegemon, 2017
HD video, color, sound
81 min.

The sound object “Panama City, Christmas 1989” and the text piece “Panama City, Christmas 1989, Supplement” refer to one of the key moments of post cold war American foreign policy: the quick invasion of Panama in 1989 and the apprehension of General Noriega. During Christmas days 1989 Noriega had fled to the Vatican Embassy, whereupon the American military installed speakers and “blasted” the Vatican Embassy building with songs like Guns N’Roses’ “Welcome to the Jungle” or Billy Idol’s “Flesh for Fantasy.” This military operation was the “blueprint” for dealing with future conflicts on many strategic aspects. One of those aspects was the military control over the media. In 1989 Colin Powell who at the time was Joint Chiefs of Staff advised: „Once you’ve got all the forces moving and everything’s being taken care of by the commanders, turn your attention to television because you can win the battle [and] lose the war if you don’t handle the story right.” The photograph “Throwback Thursday, Colin Powell” makes a tongue-in-cheek reference to Colin Powell’s effort to keep control. By taking a self portrait through a mirror, Powell unintentionally places himself into a tradition of Self-Portrait Photography by artists such as Man Ray or Andy Warhol. Dani Gal mirrors Powell self-portrait into a selfie. The golden jewellery object “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is a replica of a clip-on microphone typically used for documentary films and interviews. It bears the title of a poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. This poem, which gives an account of the experiences of a homecoming mariner, was mentioned by the Holocaust survivor Primo Levi as an example of the necessity of reporting as a witness for those who can no longer do so. In this sense, the object is an homage to the attempt at “capturing the truth.”

Biographical note

Dani Gal (IL 1975) participated in the Venice and Istanbul Biennales (both in 2011). His works and films have been shown at renowned museums including the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst Zürich (2016), Kunsthalle Wien (2015) and the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art, San Francisco (2012). This year Dani Gal will participate in exhibitions at, among others, the Zeppelinmuseum Friedrichshafen, the Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco, and the Kunstverein Hamburg.

Solo Exhibitions (selection):

2014

The Jewish Museum New York
Tel Aviv Museum of Art
Kunstraum Innsbruck

2013

Performa 13 Biennial, New York
Kunsthalle St. Gallen
Turku Art Museum

2009

Halle für Kunst Lüneburg
Pecci Museum Prato

Institutional Collections (Selection):

Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst
Bundeskunstsammlung
Kunsthau Zürich
Vuitton Collection Paris
Kunsthalle Bremen

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