

MATTHIAS BITZER
seasick sailor
16.11.2008 – 31.1.2009

We are delighted to open our new gallery spaces in Karlsruhe with Matthias Bitzer's third solo exhibition, seasick sailor. The exhibition is additionally continued in our old gallery spaces. Transitions, connections and changes between different places and times are characteristic of Matthias Bitzer's work groups, which are based on his interest in the existential structures when constructing identity. Historical personalities, whose biographies are marked by contradictoriness and gaps, are frequently the protagonists of Matthias Bitzer's research. It is not seldom that they have fallen into oblivion in our collective memory as, for example, the poet and artist Mina Loy (1882–1966) or the writer and co-founder of the Dada movement Emmy Ball-Hennings (1885–1948), to whom earlier series have referred. Matthias Bitzer translates the fragility of meaning and content into complex spatial concepts: wall drawings and architectural interventions are the fragmentary continuation of his paintings, sculptures and drawings displayed in the given exhibition space – which thus becomes the setting for new narrations.

The point of reference of the show seasick sailor is the mysterious biography and the ambiguous texts of the author Joseph Conrad (1857–1928), whose short stories and novels rank among the most significant works of British literature at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. It is interesting that Conrad was of Polish descent and, after a four-year stay in France to become a sailor, only learned English at the age of 21. He later became captain under a British flag. One of the few facts handed down is that Conrad fell ill with severe fever on the high seas, something which he never entirely recovered from until his death and was the reason for ending his career as a seafarer. Conrad's experiences as a sailor in Africa form the background of the texts he later wrote and that give insights into the time's colonial-

ist view of the other world. Conrad repeatedly integrates autobiographic elements and blurs the border between fact and fiction, like in Heart of Darkness (1902), on which Francis Ford Coppola based his anti-war film Apocalypse Now (1979). Even when Conrad's protagonists are on the way to real places that can be named, he always has them simultaneously travel into their psychological "inner foreign country". In Conrad's stories, the ocean plays a significant role and becomes an allegory: For Conrad, the ocean embodies a nonlinear concept of time, simultaneity, infinity, and the invisible transformations of identity taking place behind the visible surface that always appears to be the same.

Matthias Bitzer (*1975 Germany), studied at Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe (1998–2004). Awards: 2004 Graduiertenstipendium Baden-Württemberg; 2007 Art Price City Nordhorn. Solo Exhibitions: 2008 Art Basel Miami Beach/Art Positions; Francesca Minini, Milan; Karma International Zurich; Städtische Galerie Nordhorn; 2007 Deutsche Bundesbank; Georg Kargl, Wien. Group Exhibitions: 2008 "Legend", Departmental Domain Chamarrande, FR (curated by Alexis Vaillant); Modern Art, London; 2007 "Surface Wave", Foxy Production, New York.

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