

PRESS RELEASE

Leo Gabin. *MANGO*
September 13 – October 6, 2013

Opening: Thursday, September 12, 7 pm
Open Night with the artists: Friday, September 13, 6–9 pm



Filmstill aus *Girls Room Dance*, 2010

Kunstraum is pleased to present the first institutional solo exhibition in Germany of the Belgian artist trio Leo Gabin. Consisting of three artists (Lieven Deconinck, Gaëtan Begerem, and Robin De Vooght), Leo Gabin have been working together since 2000 and use the Internet as a source and starting point for their work. The exhibition features eleven videos, a new series of paintings, and sculpture.

MANGO is both the title of the exhibition and the flavor of an American chewing gum brand which appears in one of the works. Hauntingly intense, extremely pleasurable, and somewhat questionable – this is the nature of fruit gum. The same description might be applied to the Zeitgeist of the Internet culture that Leo Gabin relays to us.

Like media archaeologists, the artists sift through public Internet portals looking for private amateur videos that portray the self-image and face of the YouTube generation. Recurring motifs are collected, sorted by topics and edited together into a single clip. For example, the work 'Girls Room Dance' (2010) is based on numerous excerpts from found videos, in which scantily clad girls film themselves performing private booty dances. 'Long Hair' (2012) refers to an internet phenomenon that has been popularized by teenagers from the wealthy American middle-class. Here, young girls proudly present the contents of their school bags and make-up purses. In this work, as in all the other pieces, the artists work with fast image cuts, hip-hop music or other sound forms to animate or defamiliarize the image sequences. No video lasts longer than four to five minutes.

In the end, these works not only investigate the popular use of the internet medium but they also simulate it and in so doing provoke a series of questions. How are people using the Internet as a medium for self-expression? Why is it that parasocial – i.e. virtual – interactions enjoy such popularity? What does it say about the individuality and authenticity of the individual figures? Is the I/self about to dissolve in the anonymity of the digital world or is it about to find a new, more comprehensive subjectivity?

Leo Gabin also uses found material from the Internet in its paintings. In these works, silk-screened images and motifs meet painterly gestures, the white background of the images remaining, to a large extent, visible. No other medium is so linked to an expectation of the expression of an authentic self as the medium of painting. Artists like Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg shook the very foundations of this romantic concept, yet, then as now, it seemed a contradiction when the mechanisms of serial mass production enter the space of the painterly imagination, or, if a collective of artists claimed authorship of a single painting. Leo Gabin in no way dissolves this tension. The painterly and the mechanical stand here on equal footing and at times it even appears as if the authenticity of painting exists only as a quotation; whether as an expressive counterpoint to a kitsch consumerism, or as a formal simulator of a mechanically transferred image world.



The trio Leo Gabin lives and works in Ghent, Belgium. Amongst numerous international exhibitions, the artists have also participated in important group shows in Germany, most recently as part of *Private* at the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt (2013). Recent solo exhibitions include: Elizabeth Dee Gallery, New York (2013), and Peres Projects, Berlin (2012).

This exhibition takes place within the context of the anniversary program *40 years Kunstraum!* and is part of the session 'collaborations', which was launched with the exhibition *Of Two Minds. Mahlergruppe*.

Curators: Iris Mickein and Sabine Weingartner.

Further information and images can be requested by phone at +49 (0)89 5437 9900 or by email mickein@kunstraum-muenchen.de.

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