

WE LOVE AMERIKA

Viktoria Binschtok – Matthew Brannon – Stef Burghard – Carsten Fock –
Evil Knievel – Anny & Sibel Öztürk – Pratchaya Phinthong – Tilo Schulz

29.01.05 – 26.02.05

America was once the land of unlimited opportunities. As a collective projection screen for unfulfilled yearnings and hopes the 'American Dream' promised the opportunity for anybody to achieve anything if only they wanted it badly enough.

Probably no country has produced more stereotypes than the USA. It is no wonder therefore that many artists time and again set out to reflect these stereotypes, clichés and images in their work. "We love Amerika" brings together eight artistic positions which offer an ironically fragmented and critical look at the land of the "Pursuit of Happiness".

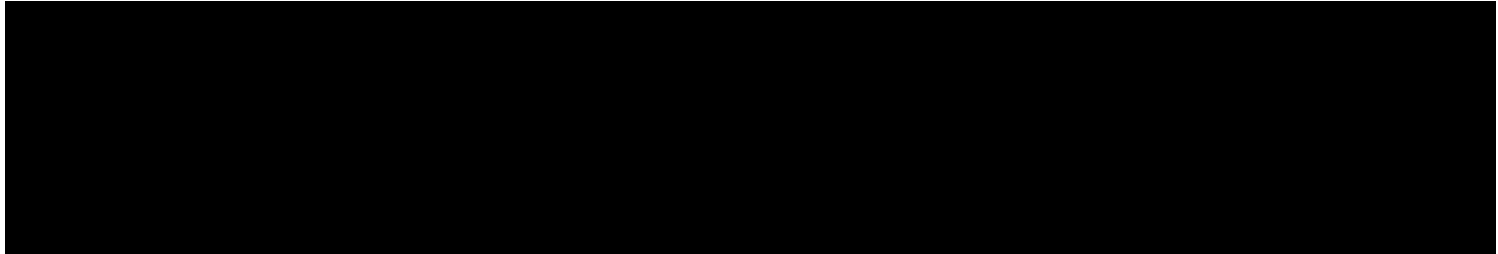
In the photo series "Walking down the Trail" Tilo Schulz re-enacts key scenes from well-known American Western films and paintings with himself in the main role. He takes over typical scenarios from the film prototypes and transposes them into an urban environment. In doing so he puts under the spotlight the traditional masculine roles of the cowboy as an embodiment of American values and virtues.

A comic-grotesque figure of the American hero is enacted by Evil Knievel as the celebrated 1960s stuntman Evel Knievel. Consistently dressed in the national colours of red, white and blue, the latter embodied typical American virtues such as cleanness, strength and daring. These continued to shine unbroken even after the failure of many of his spectacular stunts.

A patriotism of an absurd kind is the reference for Viktoria Binschtok in her photo series "Counting Stars on American Socks". The miniature of the American flag on the socks collected by her sometimes appears as little more than a caricature in its reduction. Nevertheless it continues to be legible as a flag with its symbolic content – an allegory of the outwardly fragile and from within nevertheless ideal picture of the United States of America.

The attack on the World Trade Center led Carsten Fock to hang an American flag from his window as a sign of solidarity. After the USA's subsequent attack on Afghanistan he painted the white stars and stripes black, and in Western script added the sentence "You can win if you want". Thus the harmless-sounding message of a pop song became a denunciation of the military omnipotence of the USA.

The unique history of Levi's jeans for many symbolises the image of America with its ideal of the 'American Dream'. Their long lifetime was not only a value in itself, but rose in the used jeans market to represent an expensive fashion trend. The absurd manifestations of this form a theme of Pratchaya Phinthong's work. Levi's produced in Thailand are worn on loan by local workers, given back used after a while and thus in the sought-after "used look" form find their way into economic circulation in the Western world. A part in this game of real fake will also be taken by the gallery-owner and his assistant, who for the period of the exhibition will wear Thai Levi's and then send them back with their specific history after four weeks.



Anny & Sibel Öztürk's Graffiti "I'm so bored with the USA, but what can I do???" as well as the poster saying "Madonna drinks Coke, so you can too. Tastes real good, not like a sweet poison should" quote lines from songs by the punk bands "The Clash" and "Manic Street Preachers". The critical potential of the lyrics only develops its actual subversive force in the opulence of the multicoloured 'tags' which are slowly decoded by the eye.

The American Matthew Brannon presents a no less critical look 'from the inside' with his contribution. His poster shows the likeness of George W. Bush. However the broken outlines reminiscent of the perforations edging sketchbook pages, the holes, and the paint running down in black drops distort the portrait as a flat, leering mask with no content.

In Stef Burghard's sculptural presentation of "Wolkenkratzer", the leading German magazine in the 1980s for the reception of American art, levels of artistically immanent and political significance are superimposed on each other. The reduced magazine racks form a reference both to American multi-storey architecture and to Minimal Art as a genuinely American artistic movement.

Opening hours: Tue-Sat, 11 am – 6 pm.