

ARTFORUM

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HAMBURG

Stefan Panhans and Andrea Winkler

KUNSTVEREIN HARBURGER BAHNHOF

Even before looking closely at individual works and their details, visitors to Stefan Panhans and Andrea Winkler's show "*Du kannst die Polizei belügen, aber nicht mich*" (You Can Lie to the Police But Not to Me) were conscious of a calculated mixture of improvised effort-



Stefan Panhans, *Items for Possible Videosets #6, 2010*, LightJet print, 21 1/8 x 31 1/2". From "Stefan Panhans and Andrea Winkler."

lessness and aesthetically rigorous stylization. The show appeared meticulously composed when viewed from any point in the room; walking around constantly led one to new connections and "spatial pictures." As formally different as the two artists' work might be—Panhans makes photographs and videos, while Winkler develops minimalist installations that often involve the exhibition space itself as an "actor"—it dovetailed here to create what the artists dubbed a "collage in space." Even the show's title was like an associative part of this collage. The phrase is the tagline the German television station Vox attached to the US series *Lie to Me*; pop-culture punch lines of this sort are typical for Panhans and Winkler, and much as *Lie to Me* turns on discovering hidden truths in facial microexpressions, the artists have subtly staged scenes from the world of quotidian consumerism.

Panhans's photography investigates aestheticized, zeitgeist-revealing surfaces. His beat consists of the malls and shopping streets of European city centers, which he prowls as a sort of street photographer. The artist's previous series "Red Light, White Sands, Black Palms," 2002–2007, showed passersby whose appearance—conditioned by fashion and lifestyle—bears a striking resemblance to the shopwindow displays behind them. The artificiality of these pictures fascinates because it seems so implausible—but the scenes are not staged. By contrast, the pictures Panhans showed in Hamburg were mostly from his new, still unfinished series "Items for Possible Videosets," (2010–), for which, for the first time, he staged his shots. The props came from the department store worlds familiar from his earlier work. For his pictures, he arranged them into still-life-like object collages of decorative or kitschy knickknacks or fitness items, often in absurd combinations to define a particular mood. *Items for Possible Videosets #5*, for example, combined shiny gold space blankets, a toy fence, and some upmarket spaghetti. The dark brown specialty pasta pokes out from the circular fence, the two items conjoined by the shimmering hues of Mylar to create an enchantingly disconcerting composite image. The most recent work in the series, *Items . . . #6*, shows a close-up of a silver IKEA bookcase on which a shimmery green, blue, and violet wig is presented like an absurd fetish object. The consumer surfaces from Panhans's earlier works here recur as surrealistic travesties.

Winkler's room-size installations are characterized by similarly incisive, minimal gestures: *Untitled*, 2010, her main piece in this show, was made of decorative elements such as long metal chains and curtain cords of various sizes supplemented with occasional suspended objects like key rings, carabiners, or a paper collage. Winkler set up decorative freestanding bronze and silver posts to stretch the chains, drooping slightly, across the room, creating a sort of three-dimensional drawing and at the same time guiding visitors around the space. Some of the chains led to the wall, where they were continued by linear, intentionally vague spray-painted gestures. The particular beauty of this piece—as always in Winkler's work—lay in the pronounced lightness and expansiveness of the composition. With the elegance of surprising, precise combinations, she avoided any suspicion of overkill. Finally, a separate room held a film set constructed by both artists, in which Panhans's latest video, *Sorry*, 2010, was filmed—it premiered at the show's closing on October 3.

—Jens Asthoff

Translated from German by Oliver E. Dryfuss.