

Talents 25 . In Broad Day

Mirko Martin / Melanie Martin

C/O's continues the **Talents** series with the exhibition **"In Broad Day,"** photographs by **Mirko Martin** with text by **Melanie Martin**, running from **October 8 to December 6, 2011**. The Talents series presents emerging photographers and art critics who have completed their formal studies and stand at the threshold of a career. The **opening** will take place on **Friday, October 7, 2011**, at 7 pm at the Postfuhramt at Oranienburger Straße 35/36.

"What you have to do is enter the fiction of America, enter America as fiction. It is, indeed, on this fictive basis that it dominates the world."

Jean Baudrillard

On the streets of Los Angeles: police raids and arrests, accidents and injuries, glamour and homelessness. It's all part of everyday life in the big city. Mirko Martin prowls the urban landscape like a hunter, documenting the events of daily existence. But his photographs raise numerous questions. Why is a burning man walking down the street? Where have the victims of a car crash gone? Why are people lying in groups in the middle of the sidewalk? And why are the passers-by ignoring all the catastrophes? Mirko Martin's photographs reveal absurd, spectacular, and inexplicable situations that are removed completely from the realm of familiar, everyday experience, leading us to wonder: Are these scenes real or staged? Martin plays with the viewer's voyeurism and expectations. In his photographs, documentary photography collides with staged photography, and reality seems just as theatrical as the dramatically illuminated film sets of Hollywood. Indeed everything in the image becomes part of the stage. In this tension-filled ambiguity, reality is played off against fiction, challenging the viewer's imagination.

The moments of perplexity in Mirko Martin's series "Out of a clear blue sky" arise from the combination of authentic street scenes with film set elements, including costumed actors and staged catastrophes set in the public space. None of the photographs have a title, and Martin gives no indication as to their origins, thus leaving open the question of what is authentic and what is constructed. Martin utilizes this concrete concept of passive staging in his photographs in a calm, dispassionate manner—despite the, in some cases, spectacular subject matter. His visual language, based on the use of wide shots and broad perspectives, corresponds closely to the images produced by TV and surveillance cameras and thus makes reference to the omnipresence of the mass media in Los Angeles and beyond. In this world of nonstop observation, where every event is documented and simulated, our media-saturated experience superimposes itself on our perception of reality. Mirko Martin's photographs, with their ambivalent relationship to the representation of reality, suggest that the real and the fictional are not mutually exclusive. If one wants to invest complete faith in images—and in photography as a medium of authenticity—contradictions and perplexities are bound to arise.

In both his photographic practice and his motivations, Mirko Martin stands in the tradition of classic Street Photography. Most of his photographs were taken on Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles, the neighborhood with the highest concentration of homeless people in the United States. But since Martin also uses the film industry as a source for his visual material, his work also makes clear references to staged photography—even in scenes that were not actually staged. The pioneers of Street Photography were careful to maintain a sense of immediacy and to focus on the unique, extraordinary moment. Mirko Martin's large-format works, in contrast, employ a visual concept that is much closer to painting. The compositions are not fixed on a singular visual event but express the simultaneity of multiple occurrences: diverse elements are arranged into a harmonious, self-contained whole that bears little resemblance to traditional documentary photography. In some cases, the people in the photographs even appear to be posing for the camera. In the series "Out of a clear blue sky," photographic tableaux are interspersed with small-format pictures in a snapshot aesthetic that appear to verify the truth content of the larger panoramic photographs, whose intricate compositions hint at staging.

Mirko Martin, born 1976 in Sigmaringen, completed vocational training as a photographic and media technical assistant in Freiburg from 1999 to 2001. He went on to study fine arts at the HBK Braunschweig under Friedemann von Stockhausen, Johannes Brus, Dörte Eißfeldt, and Birgit Hein, attaining his Diplom in 2007 and then completing the master class under Michael Bryntrup. From 2005 to 2006, he studied at the California Institute of the Arts, Los Angeles, and received scholarships from the DAAD and the Fulbright Commission as well as numerous awards including the Prix Voies Off at the Rencontres d'Arles and the First Prize, Aenne Biermann Prize for Contemporary German Photography. His works have been shown at the KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, the Haus der Kunststiftung Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart, the Kunstverein Hannover, the Centre PasquArt, Biel, the Fotomuseum Rotterdam, and MACRO Rome. Mirko Martin lives and works in Berlin.

Melanie Martin, born 1980, studied art and media studies in Braunschweig and Vienna, graduating in 2008. While attending the university, she also curated her own exhibition projects and wrote catalog essays, including essays co-authored by Maria Sewcz and Candice Breitz. From 2009 to 2011, she worked as a research trainee at the Deutsche Kinemathek – Museum für Film und Fernsehen in Berlin, where she was involved in the publication Fritz Langs Metropolis (2010) and the exhibition "Between Film and Art. Storyboards from Hitchcock to Spielberg." Melanie Martin lives in Berlin.

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Exhibition Oktober 8 to December 6, 2011

Opening Friday, October 7, 2011 . 7 pm

Opening hours daily . 11 am to 8 pm

Admission 10 Euro . reduced 5 Euro

Organizer C/O's e.V.

Location C/O Berlin . at the Postfuhramt . Oranienburger Straße 35/36 . 10117 Berlin

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