

Almut Linde. Radical Beauty

10.11.2016 – 26.01.2017

“My studio is the world and reality my material” —with this succinct statement the conceptual artist, photographer and sculptor **Almut Linde**, born in Lübeck in 1965 and currently living and working in Hamburg, describes the basic principles behind her artistic work. Linde questions familiar and automated processes, as well as the actions of individuals in their professional and everyday life. She also exposes social injustices, highlighting them from an unusual perspective. Hence her works have a political relevance that is more important than ever in the current art sector and discourse.

The solo exhibition ***Almut Linde – Radical Beauty***, on show at the **Drawing Room** from 10th November 2016 to 26th January 2017, presents works arising from actions with people in existential settings and includes objects, photographs, stills and a video. Linde seeks out places and contexts that one would at first sight hardly associate with art, such as barracks, socially deprived areas, a travelling circus or street prostitution at the German-Czech border. She intervenes in existing structures and incorporates them, or the people directly concerned, into her situative work.



As far back as the 1980s, the artist developed her own interpretation and further development of Minimal and conceptual Art, using the term **Dirty Minimal**, with which she specifically—and with emancipatory awareness—drew attention to the blind spots in our perception. In an interview with Oliver Zybok, Linde described her artistic strategy as follows: “In my artistic practice Dirty Minimal, the term minimal refers to a concept, a simple form, a simple instruction, while dirt refers to a shaping force that cannot be specified

further, a force that is usually ignored or called coincidence in everyday life.

The concept (minimal) is situated in reality. Predictable and unpredictable incidents occur (dirt) because a concept never corresponds to something that actually exists in reality, but is only a way of drawing closer to it. And suddenly the extremely clean and empty minimal cube is in reality no longer clean and empty”.

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Through her art, Almut Linde sheds new light on social systems by linking social structures and situations, which a short time before seemed to have nothing to do with one another at all. Hence she sent the artists of a travelling circus into the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin and photographed them there in poses typical of their everyday work, as living ready-mades (*DIRTY MINIMAL #59.1.3 – ETERNAL NOW (SCULPTURE/ ENTERTAINMENT)*, 2008/09).

In this work series, Linde brings two classification systems together: The museum, a system dedicated to collecting, preserving, researching, communicating and exhibiting significant (artistic) forms, and the circus, a system for presenting highly specialized skills regarding control of the body. The circus artist seeks the “right” form with his body in the same way that a visual artist seeks the “right” form in his works of art.



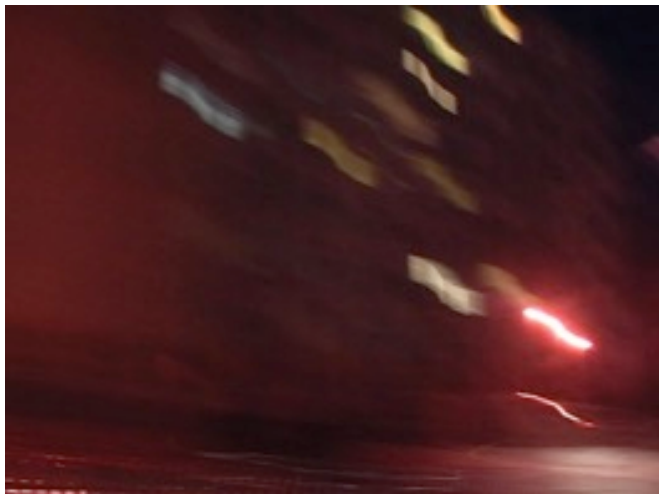
For *DIRTY MINIMAL #71.4.*, 2013, Linde asked youths from the tower block complex Kirchdorf-Süd in the Hamburg district of Wilhelmsburg to take her to their favourite place and talk about their career aspirations. In this dismal, concrete-covered wasteland (the inhabitants call their housing development “Eiger North Wall”), the youths’ lives are characterized by violence, drugs and gangs.



In the photograph, the problems seem to be far away, but are they really? An accompanying wall text lists the young people’s realistic and unrealistic visions of the future. The resignation of young people from a world in which “dreams have long dispersed in reality”, as expressed by a streetworker, is evident in answers such as “receiver of Hartz IV” (German unemployment benefit).

In order to create her works, Almut Linde moves within social peripheries and extreme situations, extracting art from them—a form of art that is the result of a targeted, non-manipulative interaction with real occurrences. She succeeds in visualizing and documenting everyday life in photographs. However, the final work of art is only the culmination, as the entire process from finding the situation to the path leading into it, the instructions for action and the collaboration with the protagonists is Linde's artistic work.

Under perilous conditions and with the support of social workers from Karo e. V., an organisation against forced prostitution, Linde filmed (*DIRTY MINIMAL #45.8 – NIGHT DRIVE*, 2007), driving at night through the street prostitution district on the Czech-German



border. Child prostitution and human trafficking are part of everyday life here, supported, among others, by respectable German citizens as clients. The video shows the blurry light-reflections of cars, street lamps and several dimly lit windows in high-rise buildings. At times, a glimpse of a woman's body seems to be visible on the rainy streets. As the video material is dark and grainy, much can only be guessed at—the abstract beauty is a strong contrast to the reality on the streets.

Rainer Maria Rilke refers to the abyss of beauty in the first of his *Duino Elegies*: “For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror, that we are still able to bear and we revere it so because it calmly disdains to destroy us”. With her Dirty Minimal works, Linde seems to have translated this lyrical dictum of Rilke into fine art: She shows us the radicalness and severity slumbering in beauty. For Linde, beauty is never something arbitrary or decorative on the wall. On the contrary, beauty is radical, when it refers to the origin (source), which is usually found in the peripheries of our perception.

Martin Eisenmann describes Almut Linde's working method as follows: “By >Radical Beauty< Linde understands the need for artistic work that goes out into the world and gives artistic form to the immanent structures of material, form, processes, and social systems. Beauty is already contained in things and need not to be added, but only revealed. Linde's approach is extreme, consistent, and precise. >Radical< is used here not only in its usual sense, but also goes back to its etymological derivation from >radix<, a root.

Radical Beauty contains the root of the movement behind the image, which also involves revealing the movement of the event.” (Martin Eisenmann, *Radical Beauty: A Short History of the Work of Almut Linde*, in exhib.-cat. *Radical Beauty. Almut Linde*, ed. by Oliver Zybock, Ostfildern, 2013, p. 13)

With her discerning work that “dirties” the sublime abstraction of minimalism with a radical reality consolidated to a work of art, Linde breaks through stereotypical perceptions and prejudices and hence enables new perspectives on many areas of our life.



Almut Linde studied fine art at the University of Fine Arts Hamburg and the Facultad de Bellas Artes, Universidad Complutense Madrid. She was a master’s student in the class of Franz Erhardt Walther and Bernhard Johannes Blume. Linde began her artistic work in an artist collective, in which she worked from 1988–1994 with Manuel Ludeña and Santiago Sierra under the name “Linde Ludeña Sierra”. In 2008 Linde was awarded the HAP Grieshaber Prize, Bonn. Her most recent solo exhibitions were in the Overbeck-Gesellschaft, Lübeck (2012), Kunstverein Braunschweig (2013), Chapter Cardiff, Wales (2013), DA2 Domus Artium 2002, Salamanca (2013), Kunstpalais Erlangen (2014), Kallmann Museum, Ismaning (2014), Weserburg – Museum für moderne Kunst, Bremen (2015) and Kunstverein Ruhr, Essen (2015/16).

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Opening: Wednesday, November 9, 2016 from 7pm – 9.30pm.

During the opening, an artist talk had been held between Almut Linde and Peter Friese (Director of Weserburg – Museum of Modern Art, Bremen).

Exhibition duration: November 10, 2016 – January 26, 2017

Opening hours: Tuesday to Thursday 12pm –7pm and by prior arrangement.

Translation: Gillian Morris, Berlin / Photos: Almut Linde, Helge Mundt, Hamburg / Courtesy: Almut Linde and Drawing Room, Hamburg

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