

Pablo Schlumberger – Nope, my girl is the sea

The story opens as a maritime experience with a figure made of nine Euro coins, shortly before they fell prey to a theft:

In 2017 Pablo Schlumberger went on the Grand Tour, taking along the prototype “Euro Manikin” he had created, allowing him to take dives in the Fontana dell Nettuno in Naples, and a few more in the Mediterranean. After almost ten years of the Euro Crisis, the artist had made himself a cold little friend built of Euros. A series of photographs in Drawing Room’s current exhibition bear witness to this: the little sculpture was fully in its element in the water, for ultimately money and water are spiritual siblings. If you find a wellspring of money, the money literally flows until you are swimming in it. If someone turns the tap off, however, you are high and dry again.

Back from his voyage, the Euro Manikin transformed into a more finely crafted version of himself and sank exhausted into the velvety hollow of his cigar box. Yet “when the artist opened the cigar box in his studio on the morning of Monday, December 18th 2017, the shine of the reflective sculpture now no longer lit up his face. Instead he saw only the white, compressed absorbent cotton.”¹ At least by now the Manikin had revealed the threefold range of his own valuation as currency: Was his value measured by his (melted-down) material worth? By his direct monetary value? Or by his artistic value? In this case the answer lay in the eyes of the thief.

The Euro Manikin serves as an example of how Pablo Schlumberger artistically thinks in interstitial spaces, and how he copes with them. Thus the works in the current exhibition are hybrids of painting and photography, of drawing and sculpture, and their narrative is constantly in flux, constantly developing further. The drama around the Euro Manikin has long since taken on a life of its own, offering a backdrop for new narratives; a horse full of longing

¹ From: Rebekka Seubert: *Au Voleur!*, Exhibition text for Pablo Schlumberger: *Total Refund*, Il Caminetto, Hamburg, 2018

gazes at the ocean and seeks its rider. This is about fidelity and loss, about desire, indulgence, gluttony and hedonism, and about luck in love, in play, and in both. The Trojan piggy bank, which came rolling life-sized into the exhibition, is a silent witness to these fluid changes, which from the depths of the ocean constantly influence the works of Pablo Schlumberger. It is the grand gesture, trust, which will be disappointed. Is the artist setting a trap for us? Within the inanimate animal pumps a bubbling fountain, and shoots the water in a circle.

And while in 2021 the virus surrounding us continues to mutate and change form, we can and must lean back and watch Schlumberger at work: *panta rhei*, 'everything flows'. We have been driven further along since 2017, and we shall see where the river with the artist drives us to shore again.

Rebekka Seubert

(Translation: Sean Gallagher)

Pablo Schlumberger. Do you know Cologne? Nope, my girl is the sea.

18th. March – 29th. July 2021

Opening Hours: Tuesday - Thursday: by appointment only