



Freisteller

Villa Romana Fellows 2008

Dani Gal, Julia Schmidt, Asli Sungu, Clemens von Wedemeyer

For the first time, the Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin will introduce the recipients of the Villa Romana Fellowship: from April 26 through June 22, 2008, new paintings, installations and videos by Dani Gal, Julia Schmidt, Asli Sungu and Clemens von Wedemeyer will be displayed at the exhibition hall on Unter den Linden.

The Villa Romana Fellowship, awarded to exceptional young talents since 1905, includes a stipend and a residency program, allowing fellows to live and work for ten months in the artists' house in Florence. This art prize is not just the oldest in Germany, but it also represents Deutsche Bank's longest cultural commitment. The presentation at the Deutsche Guggenheim marks a new milestone in the institution's partnership with the arts, while also continuing the series of exhibitions conceived by Deutsche Bank within its joint venture with the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation.

Freisteller was curated by Angelika Stepken, Director of the Villa Romana. The fellows were selected by the Berlin artist Ayşe Erkmen and the art historian Beatrice von Bismarck from Leipzig.

The German term "Freisteller," used in photography, printing and computer graphics, describes an image that is cut out from its background and context in order to insert it into a new composition. "Freisteller" is also the title of the current exhibition at the Deutsche Guggenheim, introducing the Villa Romana Fellows—four young artists with diverse biographies and nationalities working in various media. At first glance, Dani Gal, Julia Schmidt, Asli Sungu and Clemens von Wedemeyer seem to have only two things in common: they live and work in Germany, and they will now spend time together in a new cultural and geographical environment—as residents of the renowned artists' house in the hills of Florence.

Yet, as the exhibition title suggests, the selected artists share a number of common interests and strategies, specifically in the field of photography.

They disconnect motifs and themes from their original context and, through this process of “cutting out,” open onto new discursive relations. Dani Gal combines influences from popular culture with historical research; Julia Schmidt works with found images from magazines and the internet, which she isolates and fragmentizes in her paintings; Aslı Sungu’s videos explore everyday activities to show how our conception of identity, of “right” or “wrong” are socially determined; and Clemens von Wedemeyer’s films fuse elements of political documentation with fiction to expose the interplay between concrete social situations and media representation.

The organization of the exhibition space as well departs from the hermetic, protective structure of the “white cube.” The window front of the Deutsche Guggenheim is opened up, while partition walls and platforms serve as display units for the artwork. Encountered within this temporary exhibition architecture, the presented positions achieve a dual purpose: they offer insights into the creative practice of each of the recipients, and they address a broad spectrum of questions raised by contemporary art—media and institutional critique, migration, and the ability to articulate critical and political viewpoints.

The exhibition Freisteller documents how an institution like the Villa Romana, rich in tradition and far from the great metropolitan centers, can succeed in becoming a creative think tank of contemporary art and a place for intercultural exchange. Equally notable is the fact that the Villa Romana Fellows are now for the first time presented at the Deutsche Guggenheim. The affiliation between both institutions establishes a public forum that is capable of reflecting authentically the vital, internationally oriented art scene in Germany.

On the occasion of the current exhibition, a catalogue will be published in German/English and German/Italian with texts and artist interviews by Clemens Krümmel, Bert Rebhandl, Angelika Stepken and René Zechlin; book design by atelier september, Karlsruhe; 29 Euro.

Edition No. 43/1–4, issued in conjunction with *Freisteller*, consists of: No. 43/1 Dani Gal: *i.e.*, 2008; No. 43/2 Julia Schmidt: *Untitled (stripper)*, 2008; No. 43/3 Asli Sungu: *Almost*, 2008; and Clemens von Wedemeyer: *Der überflüssigen Bevölkerung*, 2008. All editions can be purchased exclusively at the Deutsche Guggenheim's MuseumsShop; prices on request, (030) 20 20 93-15 /-16.

A variety of special events are scheduled during the exhibition, including artist's talks, lectures and a children's program. Free guided tours daily at 6 p.m. The popular lunch lectures on Wednesday, 1 p.m., and tours focusing on specific topics on Sunday, 11:30 a.m., complete the program.

To celebrate the selection of the Villa Romana as a "Landmark in the Land of Ideas," Angelika Stepken, director of the artists' house and curator of the exhibition, will conduct a guided tour on May 30.

For information on the complete program: www.deutsche-guggenheim.de

Exhibition photographs can be downloaded directly from the Internet at www.photo-files.de/guggenheim.

Contact Information

Deutsche Bank
Press and Media Relations
Dr. Klaus Winker
069/910-32249
klaus.winker@db.com

Deutsche Bank
Art
Britta Färber
069/910-35960
britta.farber@db.com

Deutsche Guggenheim
030/202093-14
berlin.guggenheim@db.com

Freisteller

Villa Romana Fellows 2008

Dani Gal, Julia Schmidt, Asli Sungu, Clemens von Wedemeyer

The Artists and Their Works

Dani Gal

1975 born in Jerusalem
1997–2005 studied at the Avni Institute, Tel Aviv, the Bezalel Academy for Art and Design, Jerusalem, and the Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main, with Ayşe Erkmen
2005 visiting student at The Cooper Union, New York
2004 first solo exhibition: *Hold Up*, The Or Gallery, Vancouver, B.C.
Lives and works in Berlin

Dani Gal examines layers of meaning in history, working with the performative process of writing history and the media in which it is recorded. His source material can be a U.S. teaching unit from the 1970s, developed to inform high school students about the terrorist threat, or newspaper articles with references to the first Israeli test TV broadcast in 1966, which was never documented. Two new works by Gal are on view in this exhibition. *Conversations Regarding the Future of Architecture*, a record issued in the United States in the 1950s, preserves interviews with famous modern architects. In the exhibition hall, two of these records—one with the A side, one with the B side up—are placed on two turntables, which are activated and manipulated via motion detectors by the exhibition visitors. Their movement through the space gives the discussion about architecture an audible aura, while disrupting it at the same time. Past and present authorships intersect; a document becomes an interactive, collective sound ambience. The work is titled *Architecture Regarding the Future of Conversations*.

Just as records store sound and films and photos store images, dictionaries and encyclopedias are archives of knowledge and language. The Oxford English Dictionary lists every entry with usage information and quotation evidence. Gal entered all of the Oxford English Dictionary's quotations into a computer and visualized them with a random generator, mixing them like playing cards. Removed from their original context, the sentences no longer make sense—unless the viewer perceives and uses them as fragments of an arbitrary history.

Julia Schmidt

1976 born in Wolfen
1995–2001 studied at the Academy for Graphic and Book Arts, Leipzig, and the Glasgow School of Art
2002 first solo exhibition: *Where the Debris Meets the Sea*, Galerie Liga, Berlin
Lives and works in Leipzig

The painter Julia Schmidt works with the expectations and frustrations of the viewer.

She invests her paintings with a precarious status, giving them the appearance of elaborate provisional solutions that reject the gesture of the “final” image and yet keep the unfulfilled expectation of an encounter with the image alive. Schmidt paints with oil on MDF board. Her palette shuns unbroken hues; often, it is toned down to black-and-white. Most of her works

are distilled from media and photographic images found in magazines, books and online. In her painting practice, Schmidt moves further and further away from these points of departure: the more layers of paint she applies, the more the original image is lost. Visible refusal (to show everything) as well as visible concealment are integral to her conception of painting and its effects. Schmidt's paintings resist. They entice with opulent details and contrast these with "voided" or "violated" painterly surfaces. When shown in public, relatively few pieces are displayed on provisional walls extending at an angle into the space. The distance between the works is so vast that here again emptiness, absence and the unsaid become palpable. The decontextualization of the paintings is repeated, as is the potential to produce meaning and reference.

Aslı Sungu

1975 born in Istanbul
1999–2005 studied at the Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts, Istanbul, and the Berlin University of the Arts, master class Christiane Möbus
2006 first solo exhibition: Goethe Institute, Ankara
Lives and works in Berlin

A sober attitude towards painting and the experience of migration coexist in Aslı Sungu's entire work like two parallel, interchanging fields: the lived and the painted, biographical links and shifted contexts. One field strengthens and relieves the other. Her unsentimental relationship to painting is tied to her resistance to the imaginings of others; the experience of different lives and narratives contrasts with the here and now of her painting and is accompanied by traces of failure and loss, of resistance and humor. In the exhibition at the Deutsche Guggenheim, Sungu literally cuts out painting from its context: wall paint turns into a paint wall, more than one meter wide and three meters high, built from bright orange acrylic bricks. The wall faces the viewer larger than life, keeping its balance despite its small footprint and its lack of structural support. It stands on its own. In Sungu's videos, no one simply stands on their own. In *Get Stuck* (2003), she tries to button up the back of her blouse for a tedious 15 minutes. She could use a third hand, but she is all alone. This is a key theme in her "minor films." While her painting stands increasingly "on its own," her video films portray individuals with biographical ties, confronted with ever-new expectations. In her latest production, *Faulty* (2008), professionals reproach her from behind her back for not preparing the salad, not ironing, not cleaning the windows and not brushing her teeth "properly."

Clemens von Wedemeyer

1974 born in Göttingen
1996–2005 studied at the University of Applied Sciences, Bielefeld, and the Academy for Graphic and Book Arts, Leipzig, master class Astrid Klein
2003 first solo exhibition: *Big Business*, Plattform, Berlin
Lives and works in Berlin.

Clemens von Wedemeyer presents his latest film production *Die Probe* (The Rehearsal, 2008). It takes place backstage, where the actors retreat from the imaginary audience facing the stage and present themselves only to the viewers of the film. A newly elected president of an unidentified country rehearses a speech he is about to deliver with his speechwriter. But the words read to him are a proclamation of resignation, a refusal of office, a critique of political power. For a brief cinematic moment, the backstage becomes the setting for improbable flights of fancy. Finally, the president rushes on the stage, greeted by frenetic applause. End of film. Von Wedemeyer's dramaturgy alludes to a moment of radical reversal, subjective realization and structural change, which in some way becomes a performance within an intermission—by actors playing politicians who act with theatrical talent. The exhibition visitors repeat the ambivalent imagination of the film: they watch "the rehearsal" in a constructed backstage set. After the film is over, they return to the exhibition space. No applause awaits them, no cameras are pointed at them.

Angelika Stepken

Villa Romana

The Villa Romana was founded in 1905 by the Deutscher Künstlerbund (Association of German Artists) to create a forum for contemporary art controlled by artists and independent from state influence. The Villa Romana Fellowship, initiated in the same year by Max Klinger, served as an alternative to awards from state academies. Since that time—except for two wartime interruptions—three and later four exceptional young talents are selected annually. As fellows, they receive a stipend and the opportunity to live and work for ten months at the Villa Romana.

The history of the Villa Romana Fellowship is associated with numerous renowned artists. Past fellows include among others Horst Antes, Max Beckmann, Ernst Barlach, Georg Baselitz, Franz Bernhard, Johannes Brus, Michael Buthe, Klaus Fussmann, Werner Gilles, Katharina Grosse, Daniel Knorr, Georg Kolbe, Käthe Kollwitz, Marko Lehanka, Markus Lüpertz, Ludwig Meidner, Simon Dybbroe Moller, Max Neumann, Ansgar Nierhoff, Hans Purrmann, Karin Sander, Norbert Tadeusz, Walter Stöhrer, Thomas Virnich and Amelie von Wulffen.

This February, Dani Gal, Aslı Sungu, Julia Schmidt and Clemens von Wedemeyer moved into their studios in the newly renovated Villa Romana at the Via Senese. The artist Ayşe Erkmen and the art historian Beatrice von Bismarck served as jurors for the Villa Romana Fellowship 2008. The jury changes every year to insure a fair and open selection process.

The association Villa Romana e.V., founder of the Villa Romana Fellowship and patron of the Villa Romana, is supported by the Deutsche Bank Foundation, the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (who financed the renovation in 2006/2007) and other private sponsors.

Villa Romana

Via Senese 68
I 50124 Florence

Director:

Angelika Stepken

Assistant:

Elisabeth Giers

Board:

Christoph Marx (Chairman)

Michael Münch (Treasurer)

Dr. Brigitte Oetker

Rosa Schmitt-Neubauer

Michael Tietmann

For additional information, please visit:

www.villaromana.org

http://www.deutsche-bank-stiftung.de/kunst_5636.html