

ARTFORUM

“Photography - Ideology of Representation”

MELIKE BILIR GALLERY

Klosterwall 4,

November 5–December 18

Melike Bilir opened her gallery in Hamburg in 2010, after having curated numerous exhibitions with emerging artists in her roving space Walk of Fame since 2007. Today, Bilir is one of the most important rising dealers in Hamburg, and the show “*Fotografie—Ideologie der Abbildlichkeit*” (Photography—Ideology of Representation), organized with Oliver Ross, testifies to her excellent curatorial skills as well. The exhibition seeks, according to the press release, to contradict “the common assumption that photography, as a technical recording of images, is an aesthetic repetition of ‘reality.’” One could justifiably wonder, in the wake of texts by Benjamin, Barthes, et al.—and especially now that Photoshop and co. have become everyday—whether anyone still subscribes to this theory of realism. Fortunately, the artists—A. C. Kupper, Heiko Neumeister, Wolfgang Oelze, Philipp Schewe, and Simon Starke—do not dwell on the illustration of any one particular thesis, instead seeking to use photography as an intermediary tool for the construction and representation of reality through individual and varied approaches.



Wolfgang Oelze, *Wyoming#1/Snack*, 2010, color photograph, 31 1/2 x 23". From the series “Wyoming,” 2010.

Kupper’s *Weinende* (Crying; all works cited, 2010), for instance, shows the portrait of a woman whose features are contorted by a fit of tears. The artist, who often creates portraits by digitally synthesizing found images, here fuses a manly chin, androgynous eyes, and blonde bangs and ponytail. The work captivates and repels with its bold intimacy and its poorly disguised artificiality. Oelze’s photographs are disturbing in another way: The series “Wyoming” shows a campground devoid of people. Tentless parcels, overgrown with lush bushes and thickets of reeds, are bathed in a curious twilight, with smoke rising from the ground. Discrete traces of civilization, such as a simple wooden sign showing the word SNACK in *Wyoming#1/Snack*, only cause the place to appear more mysterious. Oelze took the photographs during a four-minute window following a heavy thunderstorm, and the resulting works present a strangely beautiful image-reality, constructed through sections of images and time.

Translated from German by Diana Reese.

— Jens Asthoff

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