

Philipp Timischl's expansive multimedia installations combine personal notes from the buzz of everyday life with found and self-produced materials to build narrative structures. Balancing between documentation and fiction, between the private and public spheres, they play with intimacy and self-reference. Major themes in his art include the lasting influence of our roots, exclusion, and queerness in relation to social classes as well as the power dynamics between art, artist, and audience.

*Artworks For All Age Groups*, the exhibition Timischl has created for his show at the Secession, is an orchestrated installation of photographs, collages, and sculptures.

The photographic series shows a conspicuously glamorous female figure; it is the artist himself in drag. Accompanied by a muscular young man, she is taking a private stroll through the Secession's deserted galleries, secret corridors, and offices. Yet her appearance and bearing suggest a misconception of what is normally considered appropriate in this setting. If Timischl relies on an exaggerated impersonation of heteronormativity, humor, and artificiality, it is not to invest his work with the aesthetic allure of camp. Rather, he seeks to spotlight a form of feigned self-confidence prompted by insecurity, marginalization, and being torn between milieus and classes. The protagonist's color-coordinated makeup and outfit in fact suggest that she took great care to mimic the institution's aesthetic and the figures in the Beethoven Frieze. Still, she apparently misread the unspoken rules on how to be and act that are in effect even in a liberal space such as the world of contemporary art.

Didier Eribon's *Returning to Reims*, an autobiographical meditation on the nexus between his sense of shame over his roots—he was born to a French working-class family—and his homosexuality, is a central reference for Timischl. The question, then, is whether familiarity with cultural techniques such as a visit to a museum can be learned. Complicating its inquiry into the underlying social distinctions, *Artworks For All Age Groups* interweaves this issue with the aesthetic qualities of the work of art. As Paul Clinton notes in his essay for the publication accompanying the show, "A Class Act":

"There's a big difference between the experiences of an educated freelancer with an unreliable wage and those of unskilled workers with few prospects. Whereas the *au courant* term 'precarity' focusses on conditions of income and job security, it does not account for the other forms of exclusion experienced by working class people. These include psychological and cultural barriers or those relating to education and taste. It is these ignored forms of class division, and their relationship to queer identity, which play out through scenes of seduction and alienation in Philipp Timischl's

photographs for ‘Artworks For All Age Groups’. [...]

Most pointedly [...] two additional and seemingly opposed forms of alienation occupy the same space in Timischl’s photographs: fashion photography and Marxist art-making. Fashion photography is generally aspirational rather than inclusive. The model poses and struts, just like the woman in Timischl’s photographs, as if she were the object of her own desire isolated from the viewer. When she does look at the camera, her gaze is cold or even appears to look right through the viewer. However, given the critical edge of Timischl’s pictures, this distancing effect would better fit the aims and techniques of Brecht and socialist art history. If Brechtian alienation in this instance is redirected through the medium of fashion photography, then in these images both would seem to hold the same status. Indeed, appreciation of the techniques of artistic modernism is just as much a sign of social distinction as owning designer clothes, and this is perhaps the most radical challenge posed by Timischl’s images. Artists whose work is about class must acknowledge that art and culture themselves remain mechanisms for distinguishing between the classes. They must recognize that their own work is caught up in the very same oppressive systems that they seek to address. Artists and the queers caught between the classes are all too aware of these tools of distinction.”

The installation expands on the photographic series to make the tension between desire and lack of access physically palpable. Rather than supporting artworks, toppled pedestal sculptures scattered throughout the room address the visitors and interfere with their exploration of the show, forcing them to make detours or impeding and even obstructing their view of the individual pictures. The two TV sculptures play a similar game in the temporal dimension. Hybrid towers combining a flat-screen monitor with a photograph mounted directly atop, they are activated by the interaction between static and time-based digital images. For the longest time, a countdown raises the spectators’ expectations of some sort of revelation, but then the complete motif is shown for no more than a split second before the countdown starts over.

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