

Harry Hachmeister

## **Jetzt weiß ich wo das Taxi ist und werde nicht mehr danach suchen**

When I began thinking about this exhibition, someone close to me, S., not much older than I am, had just died from a serious illness. Another friend was struggling with the brutal after-effects of chemotherapy and radiotherapy. And I myself, after a six-month intensive residency during which I ran a household goods shop as well as a gym for trans, non-binary and intersex people, had fallen into a bit of a slump, from which I was only slowly beginning to emerge. Altogether, it felt like a rupture, like an inability to simply carry on as before. In short, I was somewhat overwhelmed.

And then there was Leipzig, the city where I was born, where I studied. Exhibiting here is both wonderful and dreadful at the same time. There is always this pressure to produce something new. Which is rather absurd, because it is pressure I place only on myself. But the spaces are not exactly easy either—so restless, with all these protrusions and windows, so many individual walls, branching rooms, the visible storage walls themselves imposing even from behind. And then, once again, there came a reminder text from my father asking what was to be done about the pictures in the attic, which had been stored there for over 20 years, behind his desk, hidden under a blanket. My pre-diploma project. A series consisting of 26 colour photographs, each showing a single garment photographed against a white background, each labelled with a name. The clothes came from a nursing home where I had worked during my studies. It was hard but meaningful work, and often after my shift I did not know what to do with myself. Inside, I had a task—but what was my task outside? In the home there was a small room where all the clothing left behind by deceased residents was stored. Sometimes it was used to dress residents who did not have enough laundry. The names—sometimes embroidered, sometimes written—on the neatly folded blouses, jumpers and undershirts moved me, and I wanted to take them out of that room. So I photographed them properly in the studio and presented them in a row for my pre-diploma. After that, I never showed the series again. It ended up in my father's study, and over the years I forgot about it—or rather, suppressed it. But this time the message sounded more urgent: my parents had begun to clear things out, and that pile behind my father's desk—my pre-diploma—was part of it. I was under pressure, without a car, my storage already full—where was I supposed to put it? And was it even worth keeping these images? What will remain of me in the end? It was a question I had already asked myself when S. died. When she realised she did not have much time left, she asked me to help her sister deal with her estate. But it was anything but easy to decide what to keep and what not. Since then, I have been thinking more and more about what collecting, keeping and storing actually means—in different contexts, and with more or fewer resources. The G2 Schaulager is more than 1,000 square metres, roughly a hundred times the size of my art storage and forty times the size of my studio. I could, at least temporarily, “store” my pre-diploma there.

It was in July last year when I woke from an intense dream and wrote down its final sentence, hoping it would later bring the dream back to mind: *Jetzt weiss ich wo das Taxi ist und werde nicht mehr danach suchen* ('Now I know where the taxi is and I will no longer look for it'). But

I cannot remember anything else. The sentence is all that remains, along with the vague feeling that it was a strange dream. And I realise that by “strange” I mean “odd”, whereas in its original sense the word actually means something worth noticing or paying attention to. This exhibition is an attempt to visually trace that fleeting dream. My approach is retrospective.

There is the photograph of an installation I built in the hallway of my parents’ flat when I was about thirteen. At the time, my sister had already moved out, my parents were away, and I was supposed to spend the night alone—with a friend who was visiting. I remember that we made potato fritters and ate them at the coffee table in front of the television, something I was not usually allowed to do. It grew later and later, and the television programme followed suit. After the 10 p.m. crime drama—or was it a thriller?—we worked ourselves into a state of paranoia and became utterly convinced that burglars would come during the night. Before going to bed, we built a sort of obstacle course in the hallway in front of the flat door that would alert us if anyone entered. The next morning, we both woke up unharmed, each with a kitchen knife beside our pillow.

A few years later, in 1997, the Protestant Kirchentag took place in Leipzig. The school I attended after reunification had a Protestant orientation, and so the Kirchentag became a topic in art class. We were asked to develop our own work in response, without any guidelines. By then I had already been taking photographs for some time and attended a photography course with my best friend and classmate. So we roamed through Leipzig photographing everything that seemed important to us—above all, people. We called it *A journey through Leipzig* and turned it into an elaborate slide installation in the school basement, with several projectors whose slides we changed by hand. It was great fun. I still remember the atmospheric coloured light, the dust and stones, the rattling and clicking of the slide projectors. And was there music as well?

The graffiti incident happened as early as 1991, when I was on my way to my new (Protestant) school in the historic city centre. I had just come from the tram stop when I saw the sentence sprayed across a wall in large letters: *Grit wir kriegen dich* (‘Grit, we’ll get you’). At the time, that was still my name, but I did not really feel addressed. It was my first day at school, I had come from Grünau—the prefabricated housing estate on the outskirts—and was in the area for the first time; who would have known me there? But the sentence stayed with me, and when I completed my diploma in 2005, I used it as the title for both my first solo exhibition and my photographic self-portrait series. Thirteen years later, I changed my name to Harry.

Today, a few weeks before the exhibition opening, the sense of overwhelm has subsided somewhat. I have a plan; in my mind’s eye I see a strange exhibition that brings together very old works with very new ones. In between, I move around by taxi—and I would be happy to take you along.