

In his fifth exhibition at Galerie Gisela Capitain, Johannes Wohnseifer is presenting an overview of his current work under the title *The New Studio*. The show comprises thirteen new works with which Wohnseifer has partly furthered ideas contained in existing groups of works, as well developing fundamental aspects of his oeuvre.

The visitor is greeted with a life-size painted Obama, whose body appears to dissolve into a grid of dots. His suit is adorned with segment displays, those digital all-round templates capable of creating any number of words and digits, rendering the image of Obama a projection surface nonpareil.

The likeness of the American president appears in three smaller compositions that have been installed alongside one another although distributed across the three Gallery rooms and fitting there together rather like a parenthetical statement. They are made of African printed fabric bearing the portrait of Obama, which Wohnseifer has used as a ground for his painting. Thus, the three works become ready-made paintings and Obama becomes a logo. As in the case of his *Primer Paintings*, Wohnseifer has overpainted the fabric with grey ground and dyed it with four printer inks CMYK, of which the three primary colours are visible in the exhibition: blue (cyan), red (magenta) and yellow. These fabric works have been fitted with orange aluminium frames, which also feature in the main room surrounding the five large abstract paintings.

These large abstract canvases have been painted with so-called *Umtarnfarben*, camouflage paint colours that were added to the existing palette of the RAL colour matching system around ten years ago. The deployment of the German Army in Afghanistan necessitated *Neue Farben* (the 'new colours' which the titles of the works evocate) because the camouflage of the vehicles and military equipment had to be adapted to suit the geographical conditions on site. The artist used press photographs of the deployment in Afghanistan he had gathered over a number of years as a direct source of inspiration for these works.

For Wohnseifer, the five paintings are like a large landscape composition, which seems to spread out - in a similar way to the pixellation of Obama's silhouette - across the walls of the room, traversing it like a frieze. The images alternate thus between mural and painting, but also assume the character of objects, which is underlined further by the orange aluminium frames. The choice of colour here is by no means arbitrary: it is the same orange used in the livery of municipal vehicles, for example road sweepers or refuse lorries and thus that of civil infrastructure, which is juxtaposed here with the military colour system.

The extent to which Wohnseifer refuses to restrict himself to specific genres and media is also apparent in the three works in the middle room. They are hybrids made up of sculpture, object, collage, drawing and painting. Their format corresponds to a ten-fold enlargement of a cigarette packet. On the front sections of these, card slipcases surrounding cigarette multi-cartons have been collaged onto wooden panels to suggest the Marlboro logo. With the aid of a laser, a seal-like pattern has been engraved into each of the cartons recalling a tax or banknote seal and thereby implying security against forgery and authenticity.

Wohnseifer is fascinated by the history, but above all the shift in meaning of the Marlboro brand. Originally introduced to the market as a filter cigarette for women, it underwent a »gender transformation« during the 1970s and now, embodied by Marlboro Man, is regarded as the epitome of masculinity.

G A L E R I E G I S E L A C A P I T A I N

In the 52-part work *Afghanistan Beef Diary*, which can be seen in the third gallery room, Wohnseifer combines photographs from Afghanistan with meat labels from Argentinian beef – another one of the artist's passions as a collector. The labels, replete with their respective date stamps, function like a timeline.

All works in the exhibition reflect key aspects of Wohnseifer's artistic approach. In his works, he combines political, economic and social themes with general art historical questions. Also resonating centrally is a preoccupation with the transformational processes of value systems coupled with an engagement with innumerable symbols – logos – that surround us and how we read them. Thus, a homogeneous whole arises out of the heterogeneous combination of different groups of works.

The consciously associative presentation of the works guarantees the greatest possible latitude with regard to legibility. It promotes complex connections with current topics and suggests levels of interpretation without necessarily defining and, thereby, fixing them. For example, the combination of Obama's portrait with the topic of Afghanistan creates a direct reading, which is characterised and informed by current political events. But the question of art and its possibilities is also mooted here, and ultimately – via the combination of these works – the extended and thus transformed RAL colour matching system is juxtaposed with the shift in social value systems.

The openness in the presentation also frequently leads to misunderstandings that Wohnseifer in part deliberately anticipates in order to question these combinations once more. The best example is the invitation card to the show that features an image of Bianca Jagger, which, combined with the exhibition's title *The New Studio*, is rather reminiscent of the legendary Studio 54.