

MARCEL ODENBACH

Spuren sichern

April 18 – Mai 19, 2018

Galerie Gisela Capitain is pleased to announce the exhibition *Spuren sichern (Securing Evidence)* with new works by Marcel Odenbach.

Marcel Odenbach (born 1953 in Cologne and currently based in Cologne, Berlin, and Cape Coast, Ghana) grew to international prominence largely for his pioneering video art in the 1970s. Odenbach's current work also consists of complex, collaged works on paper. His artistic creations center on the themes of coming to terms with German history and German colonialism in Africa. Odenbach, however, constantly expands the scope of his work, observing different, foreign cultures and discussing contemporary historical issues like racism, xenophobia, discrimination, and oppression. His work is also always distinctly autobiographical.

In his second exhibition with Galerie Gisela Capitain, Marcel Odenbach shows five works on paper as well as a video installation. Odenbach understands the four paper collages in the central exhibition space as self-portraits. The main thematic and motivic elements are related to topics and media that played an important role for the artist already in the 1970's: film, sound, and paper.

The diptych *Film ab (The film is rolling)*, 2018 shows two reels of film: the reel on the left comes from the movie *Querelle (Quarrel)* by Rainer Werner Fassbinder. The reel on the right refers to US artist and filmmaker Paul Sharits, largely known for his experimental flicker films in the 1960s and 1970s. *Selbstportrait (Self Portrait)*, 2017 shows the artist's private record collection from the 1970s through the 1980s. *Atelierspuren (Studio Marks)*, 2017 depicts the gray floor of Odenbach's studio with clearly recognizable traces of his working process, strips of adhesive tape, and scraps of paper. As is typical of his paper collages, their subject is recognizable from a distance, but in close-up countless bits of newspapers, magazines, and photographs from the artist's family archive appear. The photocopied and colored clippings of text and images form the basis of the paper works, composing a visual whole. The collages layer particular moments and events and connect image-sequences to text-passages. In the self-portrait *Atelierspuren (Studio Marks)*, scenes of a happening at the Kölnische Kunstverein in 1970 are placed next to images of the Hungarian border opening for refugees in 2015. Another strip of paper shows portraits of Odenbach from his childhood and youth. His self-portraits always have a political dimension. The entanglement of themes relevant to both the personal and biographical as well as the general, societal, and historical is a pervasive feature in his oeuvre.

The paper collage *Tausend und eine Nacht (One Thousand and One Night)*, 2017 has a special status in the exhibition. Formally, it is the first of Odenbach's paper collages that is three-dimensional. Seen from a distance, it shows a sunny view of a Middle Eastern-seeming cityscape. Upon a closer look, one recognizes photographs of international politicians, former colonial rulers and civilians, politically relevant sites and settings, excerpts of the Quran and the Old Testament, but also details of well know artworks by Delacroix, Ingres and Goya. The city we see is Aleppo, viewed from a house in ruins. All of these images open up intuitive associations in the viewer. Odenbach makes both a subject of discussion, the contemporary Syrian conflict as well as the historical, Western view of the Arabic world - the eighteenth and nineteenth century orientalism.

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

With the two-channel video installation *Tropenkoller (Tropical Frenzy)*, 2017 Odenbach addresses the history and present day of Togo. Togo was a German colony from 1884 until the first World War, serving as the German “model colony” (Musterkolonie). In the video work, Odenbach contrasts contemporary footage of Togo with historical documentary material from colonial times between 1913–1914. The superimposed textual excerpts come from writings of the same period. Searching for traces of German colonial rule, Odenbach visited the original locations of the documentation and detected attempts to obscure the traces of this era. Nevertheless these are ever-present, particularly in the architecture and day-to-day world of the population.

In both the videos as well as the works on paper, a network of current and historical images and text emerges, raising questions about nationality, politics, and society. With the use of historical citations and contemporary realities, Odenbach “secures” traces on the one hand while at the same time addressing the construction of history on the other. The interrogation of media images and their contribution to the formation of collective memory is an intrinsic component of his oeuvre.