centrum

contemporary kultur berlin

Chloe Brooks
PARLOUR
14 November - 13 December 2015

Opening: Saturday 14 November 2015, 6pm
Film Screening: Sunday 29 November 2015, 5pm

In her work British artist Chloe Brooks engages with architectural histories, integrating historicising elements into given architectural surroundings. Through partly subtle changes and partly bold gestures the artist creates ambivalent, often absurd situations, which allow the beholder to perceive new and previously unexpected or hidden sides to their environment.

For her exhibition at Centrum Chloe Brooks has developed a site-specific work with several elements, with which the artist addresses the history of the architecture and the previous use of the project space and relates it to the history of the *parlour*. First used during medieval times, the term *parlour* (from French *parler*, to speak) was used to describe the parts of a monastery – often situated just behind the main entrance on the west side – which were used for communication and trade with the outside world. Later in the 18th and 19th centuries, the *parlour* or *drawing room* became the 'window to the world' within the private homes of the upper and later also the middle classes, where visitors were received and where the family presented itself through the display of their best furniture, the highlights of their art collection, and other status symbols.

The extravagance associated with the historical meaning of the term is rendered ambivalent in the exhibition through a distinct use of material: the historicising architectural elements typical of a *parlour* are finished in black shiny vinyl and set in contrast with peach-coloured walls, a direct reference to Centrum's previous history, which before its transformation into an exhibition space served as the bar and anteroom of a brothel. While today the prominent red floor tiles are the only remnants of the previous history of the space, the artist used photographs taken during the time of the refurbishment, to partly reconstruct the preceding state of the space. However, while the original wall colour tended more into yellow, the colour chosen has been purposefully exaggerated: the fleshy tone evokes the hue of human skin, the black vinyl triggers the association with patent leather creating an environment where the contemporary use of the term *parlour* as in 'massage parlour' with its sleazy connotations used in the sex industry plays its role.

Another important part of the installation is a series of four etchings, each depicting a building in 20th century American neoclassicism. A typical characteristic of this kind of

architecture are archaising columns, which evoke the temples of ancient Greece, together with modern green glass curtains. The combination of a historicising vocabulary of architectural forms with modern building materials was chosen to transmit a certain image: symmetry and balance as a symbol for strength, longevity and wealth as well as progress and transparency. For the etchings, the artist first produced digital drawings of the buildings which were then photo-etched onto a metal plate and hand-printed. Etchings are a form of intaglio printing, which, in the 19th century, after the invention of alternative modes of mass reproduction, stayed a privileged medium for art and could be found foremost in art collections of the middle classes. In Chloe Brooks' works, modern means meet with tradition: the preliminary drawing executed with digital technology is subsequently printed on paper using an outdated printing technique. The neoclassicist forms found in the depicted buildings can also be found directly and indirectly referenced in various other elements of the installation.

Situating the exhibition space within the tradition of the *parlour* as a place for communication, trade, and social representation and thus embedding it within a larger historical context, the artist at the same time evokes the history of the striving for autonomy in art and puts it up for discussion. Making classicist architectural elements meet with historical reconstruction and using modern technologies and materials, in her installation *PARLOUR* Chloe Brooks creates a field of unresolved tension between private and public, representation and purposelessness, to investigate the roles of art and architecture as fashionably concealed traditionalism.

On the occasion of her exhibition *PARLOUR* at Centrum, Chloe Brooks has chosen to show Hitchcock's *Dial M for Murder* (1954). The movie focuses on one of Hitchcock's favourite themes, the possibility of the perfect murder. Staying faithful to Frederick Knott's original, a drawing room play from 1952 with the same title, Hitchcock has captured the murderous plot unravel within a single room, the most important room of the apartment, its *parlour*.

Chloe Brooks (1982, UK) lives and works in Bristol and Berlin. She holds a degree in Fine Art from the University of the West of England, Bristol (2004) and graduated from the University of the West of England with a Master's degree in 2007. She won the second price at Exeter Contemporary Open in 2012, and was nominated for the Drawing Room Bursary Award in 2015. She has participated in several residency programmes including *OUTHOUSE*, Norwich (2009) and a two-month residency in Washington DC (2012).

Solo Exhibitions (selection): *INTERFACE,* Hastings, commission for Hastings Town Centre, Coastal Currents Art Festival, UK (2011); *Division of Order*, Bristol Diving School, incl. a limited edition publication, Bristol, UK (2009); *The Parade Passed By*, Round the Corner, Teatro de Trindad, Lisbon, Portugal (2009); *Balancing a Leaf,* Northcabin, Redcliffe Bridge, Bristol, UK (2008).

Group Exhibitions (selection): *Plymouth Contemporary Open 2015*, Peninsula Arts Gallery, Plymouth, UK (2015); *CAVE*, Cave Art Fair, Liverpool Biennial, UK (2012); *Scintilla*, CoExist, Southend-on-Sea, UK (2011); *Futures Market*, The Mews project space at Lisbon Art Fair, Portugal (2010); *Chloe Brooks and Gonçalo Sena*, The Mews project space, London, UK (2009); *Primer*, Spike Island, Gallery 2, Bristol, UK (2008).