

SelfmadeSaints - Viktor Kröll

If we look at the behaviour which defines our social interaction with others we can't deny the increased use of "external" tools, widely residing in the web 2.0. These tools function as the extended self, allowing us to cross borders (of our selves) we would not usually go beyond. Or not that easily.

They give permission and at the same time force us to think about self-representation and our desired and imagined (alter) ego. We enter a public platform, a stage where we strive paradoxically to share our privacy, intimacy and exclusive details of our persona to publicise those in aspiration to relate and connect with others. Following this bearing in the ambition *the more we are publicly visible the more powerful we are* we become fragile as never before.

Viktor Kröll characterises this as social porn which plays a dominant role in his photographic work. It is concerned not with the **consequence** of Andy Warhol's infamous quote *In the future everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes* but deals with different levels such as returning self-determination and ownership to the depicted person as well as the power struggle of re-representation and self-representation between the photographer and the person to be photographed.

As a certain way of repercussion of this fragility, the characteristics of *New Age* are picked up again, based on the idea of being able to create a new individual entirely by oneself. The process of this creation results in an excessively idealistic embodiment of the individual, where glorification is exaggerated and imperfection unwanted and disguised. In Kröll's photographs we see people reproduced as Saints using distinctive symbols and visual language we are familiar with in religious and esoteric terms. Through the nudity, *as god has created us*, the fragility is not only displayed but also at the same time disarmed as the protagonists consciously decide to be photographed as Saints by using a torch to create a (n instant) Halo. The Aureola highlights the desired perfect status but is coincidentally subverted by the bareness of the protagonists, allowing the viewer to spot blemish.

In return this self-awareness is undermined by the fact that there is the persona of the photographer present, in this case Kröll himself, who sensitively composes his images. Although the portraits may look rough, this attribute is used (as apparatus) to illustrate the oscillating levels, that of the protagonist's deliberate self-reproduction and that of the photographer as creator.

Kröll refuses to process the photographs once taken, they are captured with an analog 35 mm camera. The resulting notion of DIY mirrors the artist's approach whose background derives from advertising. The principle used in this field is to enter other people's heads with an idea as quickly as possible. Kröll uses this as point of departure to expose the ephemeral and fast moving values in nowadays society.

Viktor Kröll's work *SelfmadeSaints* thus cannot only be understood as a simple social critique but as a snapshot of the now, enabling the beholder to claim back ownership over her/himself in a very dense medial structure of self-representation.

Miriam Kathrein

Viktor Kröll (*1979) is an artist, photographer and writer currently based in Vienna. He studied Information Design at Joanneum, Graz, Austria. Recent shows include *Steirischer Herbst* , Graz in 2001, *Please Identify*, ESC, Graz in 2002, *Micro Visuals I* , Medienturm, Graz in 2002 and *Mikrokinofest* , Belgrade in 2002. His work was shown in *Forum Stadtpark* in Graz and published in *IDEAL*, Rosebud #6, Vienna in 2006.