

Among the *up and coming* artists on the international art scene, Stefan Brüggemann (Mexico City, 1975), based in London, is one to keep an eye on. Considered one of the representatives of the neo-conceptual art movement, he is best known for his *Showtitles* (2000-ongoing) – a project of show titles that can freely be used by anyone, with the only rule that the name of the artist has to be credited on the back of the invitation – that has gained him the title of finalist at the Becks Future Prize 2006. The artist's work reflects in an irreverent, polemic and often provocative way upon contemporary society through the use of different media. Stefan Brüggemann's artistic practice, even though it ranges from photography, to neon works, from writing to filmmaking, from planning hotels to curatorial activities, distinguishes itself for a strong conceptual coherence that is gaining him an international reputation.

Interviewed after his solo show at the London Gallery Blow de la Barra, Brüggemann explains to us his work and his thought through his last piece: the Obliteration Series (2006)

EMPTY AS ()

(SHOW TITLE #1033 BY STEFAN BRÜGGEMANN)

Ilaria Gianni: Something that really touched me in your studio was the emptiness of the space: no books, no films, no documents, no works.... It was very strange considering that your practice considers language, history and cinema as cultural products to rethink, re-elaborate, re-discuss. Where is everything you read and you see? Why is your working space empty?

Stefan Brüggemann: My studio is always empty because everything I do is a product and I want it out of the studio as soon as possible: as an artwork or as trash. I always try to keep the studio empty because I'm not interested in process and mess, whereas I always get excited in emptiness, because it creates the possibility for something new to happen. All the things I see are outside the studio: in society, politics and cities and all the things I read are in libraries, news stands and on billboards.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF REPRESENTING NOTHING

(SHOW TITLE #612 BY STEFAN BRÜGGEMANN)

IG: The *Obliteration Series* can maybe link to this idea of emptiness. They are neon works with the form of scribbles. Unlike the *Text Pieces* (1999-ongoing) that explicitly communicated thoughts, concepts, ideas, this work doesn't say anything. Can you tell us a bit about the process that brought you from writing to scribbling?

SB: I wanted to create a contradiction by obliterating nothing. The idea of the Obliteration Series is that by translating a scribble from a piece of paper to a neon lots of contradictions and opposites happen: from instant gesture to industrial fabrication, from light to no light, from writing to lack of writing. The work comes from a very negative thought, and it goes towards the visual seduction of a work being completely empty.

NO. THE QUESTION

(SHOW TITLE #1206 BY STEFAN BRÜGGEMANN)

IG: What does "no" represent to you?

SB: "No" for my practice is an act of creation as well as the "misunderstanding": it mirrors your thoughts into other different thoughts.

POST-PUNK

(SHOW TITLE #77 BY STEFAN BRÜGGEMANN)

IG: If The *Obliteration Series* is stimulating the creation of thoughts through the idea of negation and through the denial of language, an important part at the show at Blow de la Barra on the other hand was written and readable. I'm referring to the catalogue that opens up with a conversation with Malcolm McLaren. I was interested in knowing why you decided to undertake a conversation with the father of the punk movement in London; probably the last strong, visible and united cultural movement that our generation had the chance

to experience. What has he represented to you and what does he still represent?

SB: The conversation with Malcolm McLaren echoes the *Obliteration Series* in the sense that punk was a provocation of denial declaring that there is "NO FUTURE". The *Obliteration Series* in some way has the spirit of punk in making a provocation out of nothing, producing the denial of communication, conceiving "misunderstanding" as a way to communicate. It is also very linked to the idea of acceleration in a capitalist society.

UNCERTAINTY NOW

(SHOW TITLE #586 BY STEFAN BRÜGGEMANN)

IG: So is the *Obliteration Series* a consequence of a sort of "disillusion" that you perceived in the dominant cultural system you experienced that didn't bring breaking ideas? It could be read as a strong reaction towards the lack of ideals embodied by our generation, or maybe in general by the period we are living...

SB: We belong to a society with no ideals: all is moved by a process of individualization. Maybe this is what creates a distant relation to the concept of a generation and we become timeless. In that sense my *Text Pieces* have a strong sense of timelessness.

MEANS NOTHING ELSE BUT WHAT IT IS

(SHOW TITLE #592 BY STEFAN BRÜGGEMANN)

IG: Could you tell us something about your *Text Pieces*?

SB: The only thing that I could say about the *Text Pieces* is: what you read is what you get.

THIS IS NOT THE END

(SHOW TITLE #1144 BY STEFAN BRÜGGEMANN)

IG: Any future projects you are working on?

TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW

Ilaria Gianni, 2007

www.stefanbruggemann.com

SB: I am working on a solo exhibition at the Kunsthalle Bern that will open at the beginning of 2008 with the concept of reversal, nothingness and negation.