

Beautiful Women An Art Project

Questions:

How can I show what nobody wants to see? How can I make the intolerable tolerable, accessible, and comprehensible, even just for a moment? How can I show THIS without arousing feelings of guilt, fear, or false “hope” in the viewer?

Being a refugee is perhaps the most difficult situation of human existence. Women seeking refuge are particularly vulnerable and defenceless. While images of children seeking refuge instil compassion, those of women incite a deep fear in the viewer.

A woman or a mother on the run ultimately symbolises the end of a society – the family, the tribe, the country – and reminds us of our own personal helplessness, and the brutal reality of our transience.

Idea:

On the facades of various buildings in the city of Zurich large coloured banners are stretched. Each banner is a portrait. Not of a celebrity or political figure, not of a young model or cute kid trying to sell something. These are the portraits of women seeking refuge.

Concept:

The project will be conducted in different stages:

During one or more visits to the SAO Bashira Centre in Lesbos, I will portray those residing there and, if possible, have a conversation with them. The portraits will be done on paper with pen.



Out of the work done in Lesbos a few selected portraits will be turned into “Pop-Art” and “Street-Art” portraits.



Then digitalized and printed in similar styles.



The series will then be digitalised and edited onto large, visible banners. These banners will then be hung on the facades of various buildings in Zurich.

During a celebratory vernissage the banners will then be admired by means of a city tour. During the tour, a project flyer will be distributed, consisting of conversation notes and information on each portrait.



Reason:

For some years now I have been concerned with the question of how I can use my art to bring a “subject” that gets little or no attention to the public. In order to do so, I try to build a bridge by carefully using clichés and adapting to the familiar and comfortable. This does not mean that the subject fades into the background, but that the subject can be brought closer to the people. Then, out of fear or guilt, dialogue and action can be born.

I got the idea for “Beautiful Women” while cleaning up my last exhibition: “Lipstick Leaders”. It was a special exhibition, the project, which features an “ancestral gallery” of strict portraits of female leaders, was presented in the midst of a contemporary arts fair. At first, I did not realise it, but after a visitor said with a sigh: “At last, women in clothes!”, I noticed how all around women were portrayed as either naked, half-naked, or covered with pinkish-red glitter.

Although my installation was placed in a large room in the middle of the fair, its commercial justification was achieved only through the sparkling nudity.

In “Beautiful Women” I want only to look at a place that arouses fear in me. There is nothing beautiful there for me to look at, and yet I know I must look regardless. I do not want to “beautify” or “sweeten” the theme of women seeking refuge, and yet I want to get them as close to the viewer as possible.

The portraits that I will draw on location will be then altered to Pop-art portraits reproduced in prints, and ultimately be transformed into brightly coloured banners. As a result, the portraits can be brought to a large audience in a “comfortable” way. This will allow the subject to be brought closer to the public, opening the topic up and making it more accessible.

Pop Art Portraits: The reworking of drawn portraits into prints has been used for quite some time, as an inexpensive way of bringing art to the public. I want to use Pop Art, because it helps to set a versatile transformation into motion. On the one hand, the topic will become “socially acceptable”, and on the other it will no longer be “mine” but will become part of the community. (Model – me, Prints – public)

Visibility in the city: When I told an artist colleague of mine about the basic idea of the project, he replied: “So the women could be where they might want to be – drinking coffee with friends or strolling through the city.” For me art also serves to show an alternate reality, the possibility of healing, wherever that may be for them.