

GALERIE STEINLE
proudly presents



Kasper Kovitz, foam church II, 2007
construction foam on canvas, 51 x 67 x 10 cm

KASPER KOVITZ // NEWES FROM AMERICA

Opening // Friday, September 14th, 2007, 6 pm

OPEN ART // Saturday/Sunday September 15th/16th 2007, 12-6 pm

Öffnungszeiten // Tuesday/Wednesday/Friday 12-6 pm / Thursday 12-9 pm / Saturday 12-3 pm
until November 15th, 2007

Newes from America is Kasper Kovitz's (*1968/Vienna) first solo show in Europe since he left Austria for America 12 years ago.

K K arrived in California via New York City and New Mexico and now lives in Los Angeles – that point on European maps that is furthest west, where the sun sets last. Inspired by this geography, he started a complex body of work that will ultimately consist of a total of 670 pieces. The number of pieces was motivated by the number of pages in a book about the myth of the American frontier. The body of work is structured like illustrations in an *Entwicklungsroman* (coming of age novel), though not necessarily in chronological order. The individual pieces can be fragmentary statements, though in combination they could also form a narrative.

If one was forced to categorize his choice of subjects, it would be the idea of landscape, and more specifically the mythical character of the West and the American landscape. Increasingly, these landscapes are populated with individuals, whose fates are determined by the mythical quality of the setting in which they appear. If the subjects are action (building a cabin) or signs of action (the finished cabin), they are again and again interspersed with plain landscapes or „elbowroom“.

K K draws heavily on the rich vocabulary of the American national myth: the captivity myth, manifest destiny and regeneration through violence. Images that hold an iconic significance to Americans appear again and again in his work: the log cabin, the teepee, state parks, the highway system, etc. But the American National Myth also gets re-appropriated to serve as a vocabulary to describe his personal and artistic coming of age.

There also seems to be an increasingly significant connection between his subject matter and the unusual materials and techniques he uses. Tree sap, bear scat and fruit jam are used as well as paint and pencil.

It's often hard to know if his work is depicting scenes of historical relevance or mythological reference or if it is merely a document of everyday life – not that he seems concerned with recognizability. In the tradition of artists of the modern era, especially the abstract expressionists, he believes the pictorial essence can often be communicated whether or not the subject matter is obvious and identifiable. Like Joseph Beuys and other European artists, he uses materials for their suggestive qualities (if you don't believe in magic) or magical properties (if you do). KK also uses signs of decay to evoke feelings of historical significance – the way he did while “aging” antiques for rich New Yorkers who wanted their furnishings to imply a history that they did not have.

It is clear, though, that Kovitz uses the West as colossal metaphor for the human condition and possibly the final resting place of the civilization that originated in Europe. He now finds himself outwardly exploring this wide open physical place and in steady self-reflection in this complex metaphoric „landscape.“

In this show, the title „Newes from America“ is a reference to a book by Captain John Underhill written in 1637. Underhill, who was a prominent magistrate and soldier in Puritan Massachusetts, wrote the book after his return to England, combining a religious and legal defense of certain “unappreciated” actions he took in the New World with an advertisement for available lands on the frontier.

Kovitz puts the work shown here into the context of this type of colonial literature with its combination of advertisement, religious and philosophical tract and adventure story. Kovitz's *Newes from America* picks up on the distortions that a report home, like Underhill's (or Captain John Smith's lengthy rationalization of his marriage to Pocahontas) brings to light. By adding „Vor den Dachaufsetzen,“ he invokes the traditional practice of German immigrants (as depicted in one of his works in tree sap!) of erecting a little tree on a house as soon as it was ready to receive a roof, and reconfirms the cross pollination of old and new country.

Kovitz has shown in Austria, Los Angeles, New York City and has exhibited video work in connection with the Venice Biennale and at the Filmfestival Diagonale, Salzburg, Austria. He has lectured at Eastern Connecticut State University, CT, the Queens Museum of Art, NYC, and to the Graduate Seminar at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. Kasper Kovitz has been awarded the MAK/Schindler Scholarship, the Marie Walsh Sharpe Studio Program and residencies at the International Studio and Curatorial Program in NYC and at RAIR, New Mexico. “Sunset: delayed”, a collaboration with architect Andrea Lenardin Madden is currently on view at the MAK Vienna.

An Edition of *Land's End* will be printed exclusively on the occasion of the exhibition.



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