

# WEARENOTAFRD



## The work of Alexandra Wacker

I like my neighborhood to contain a little bit of consequence. It keeps things on their heels and nothing is taken for granted. No one bumps into each other without acknowledgement and a steady stream of alertness maintains an edge that wards off entitlement. One's comfort-zone is always challenged to a greater or lesser degree and one's safety isn't a given "right of passage" but is negotiated continuously.

**"zeitraumzeit" is "space[of]time"** It's translated this way in the catalogue produced by the Künstlerhaus, Wien for the show of the same title. To commemorate the 140<sup>th</sup> birthday of "the first society building in the entire German-speaking world"...<sup>1</sup>. The Künstlerhaus gave the task to two curators who apparently held steady fast to the adage, "greater in numbers", 93 artists to be exact.

The place was packed. There was no where to rest your eyes, take pause and absorb the vast number of works. It was almost indiscernible, that precious bit of empty space that facilitates the markers that define the boundaries of where an "artwork" begins and ends. In fairness to the handful of artists who showed up with something to share, a more stringent selection process would have paved an unobstructed path to the ideas that appear clearer if not "wordy" in the catalogue than in the show. The remaining works appeared as simulations using the usual materials and technologies one would expect in such a Multi-media dominated blitz. They were defused because of their tight proximity to each other, like a poorly stocked "Mega Bau-Max" (Home Depot), employing "abstraction" and "conceptual art" as hyperbole with docile results as if the curators decided to commandeer the place with numbers promoting quantity to deflect the perception of the lack of quality.

It wasn't alternating strobe lights, convex lenses rotating in a darkened room, or omitting tones at the lowest decimals only dogs could hear but promised never the less to be a vital subversive component to a concept, nor did it have its hands tied behind its back while being blind folded to illustrate the severity of content. It was: *"Railway"*, 2004 ÖL auf Leinwand, 300 x 200 cm. by Alexandra Wacker, tucked away in the corner on the wall of a back room occupying the "Mafia Seat".

The painting was seductive through its virtuousness of form and fluent delivery. In a startling unabashed approach Ms Wacker's painting *"Railway"* hung smug and well endowed with the fundamentals to elicit one's awareness' to their relationship to the "space of time" and almost punishes to viewer to concede to the immediacy of impact in the image itself and brings it home. You can visualize the motion, feel the weight of the brush and sense the knowledge the artist has with the medium and her rapport with the surface of the canvas. Comprised in twelve elongated horizontal canvases stacked in a vertical format, this piece encapsulates the notions of not only occupying but participating in the "space of time" with relevance to its architectural configuration and the efficiency and lyricalness that is inherent in the other paintings, (album covers), illustrated in this article. Not hiding behind obvious signifiers of content IE, popular cultural icons for source material via the media, Alexandra Wacker insists on the full frontal approach of an in your face painting stratagem. Most startling is the portrait(s) of Marcus Omofuma, an African who died while in the custody of immigration officials in flight with "duck tape" wrapped around his mouth. Ms Wacker displays an inexorable fervor for her subject matter and wills it onto her canvases with the pledge of a sniper's "one shot" boast. What follows is a poignant suite of paintings that even in their penetrating indignation further displays the valor of her application almost to a fault.

<sup>1</sup> Preface, "zeitraumzeit", Joachim Lothar Gartner, Präsident der Gesellschaft bildender Künstlerhaus.

Sometimes I think what's more dangerous is a town full of obedient neighbors, living as they do appendaged to each other in let's say Queens, afraid to call attention to themselves by painting their house (which is just the other side of two other houses) a color that just doesn't go, bringing down the property value on the entire block which is somebody else's "hood". What's needed is that same somebody or something to break up the set and disrupt the continuum of the blanket concept that sounds good in print but socializes a context, an implanted counter culture virus to start some stuff and keep us from the complicity of a false sense of safety in numbers. So that if maintained indefinitely someone among us is bound to do something that asserts our virility as well as our virtues as intrinsic in the creative process and re-constructs a matrix of situations, objects and incidents that both collide and coalesce with our main frame. And inspire us to dare make something that looks suspicious, threatens to de-stabilise our "personal space" and even though you had to pay admission, can possibly do some harm if you're not alert, but in the end, leaves one with the feeling of what would we ever have done without it.

But until then there is Alexandra Wacker's "Vinyl on Canvas" album covers..

Alexander Viscio