

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Bonami, Francesco, "Kai Althoff", *Flash Art*, (November/December 1996), p. 98.

O U V E R T U R E

KAI ALTHOFF

FRANCESCO BONAMI

THE WORK OF Kai Althoff is a multilayered vision of private worlds, pop realities, and insignificant moments. It perfectly reflects the contemporary perspective on different cultures, fashion, music, art, private identity, and undisclosed genders that converge in the panorama of our futureless reality where even historical referencing assumes a timeless dimen-

sion. What is interesting in Althoff's methodology is the effect of his activity as an artist on his role as a musician, and not, as we might expect, the other way around. The album cover for his record doesn't mirror the content of the music, rather it echoes the visual sources absorbed by the artist during the acoustic creation. Althoff could be the transverse manifestation of Captain Beefheart.

The drawings and watercolors are musical in the simplistic manner that their contained figures are listening to music and in doing so are experiencing an existential transformation. The works are images with a sound track, yet they do not actually possess audible sounds or references. What makes the subjects musical are their postures, the way the figures struggle with or embrace the symbolic nature of the medium (the drawing not the music).

One is receiving equal musical satisfaction through silence as through this ideal visual blend of Lascaux, Milton Glaser, and Sergeant Pepper iconology. Kai Althoff is a primitive citizen dealing

with the feelings of a generation wrapped within a cultural quilt. His production runs along the border of ritualistic monotony forced to make an entry on a cheap notebook. Yet, he is quite able to tightrope walk over the abyss of flatness where dramatic cultural references coincide more and more often with the birthdays and deaths of over-night "authors." Traversing back and forth on the rope, he ends up filling the void with enthusiastic and emblematic flashes.

Francesco Bonami is a critic based in New York. He heads the Flash Art U.S. editorial desk.

Kai Althoff was born in 1966 in Cologne where he lives and works.

Selected solo shows: 1993: Lukas & Hoffman, Berlin; Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen; 1995: Daniel Buchholz, Cologne; Künstlerhaus Stuttgart; 1966: Lukas & Hoffman, Cologne.

Selected group shows: 1993: "6 Wochen Brüssel," Lukas & Hoffman, Brussels; "E," Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; Venice Biennale; 1994: "Acrochage," Lukas & Hoffman, Cologne; "Sonnen München," Daniel Buchholz, Cologne; "Stonewall," White Columns, New York; 1995: "Wild Walls," Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1996: Museo Contemporaneo São Paulo.



Clockwise from left: Summer Party, 1991. Courtesy Robert Prime, London; Reincarnation Collage, 1990; A coming-out, 1992. From the book *Ashleys; Fabio — Erwachsen werden*, 1992 (series of 16 drawings).