

Stephan Dillemoth
Diskodekorationen: From Another Century
Curated by Saim Demircan

Between 1987 and 1989, Stephan Dillemoth moved to Chicago on a stipend from the state of Bavaria, where he currently lives. During his time in Illinois, the artist made series' of wall assemblages, collages, and vitrines, which he collectively refers to as *Diskodekorationen* (disco decorations) influenced by the house music that had been defined in the Midwest city, and which he encountered first-hand while residing there in the late 1980s. These pieces are located between the artist's early painting after studying at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf, and his return to Germany's Rhineland where he started the influential artist-run space Friesenwall 120 in Cologne in 1990.

With 1979's Disco Demolition Derby and DJ Steve Dahl's 'Disco sucks' campaign in Chicago, as a musical genre disco had become under attack. House mutated from its – and the communities that were its proponents – discrimination. Germany proved influential in the development of transatlantic dance music at this time. The electronica of several European outfits, including Kraftwerk who themselves hailed from Düsseldorf, resonated with early 1980s African American youth. The formation of house can also be traced back to Munich where Giorgio Moroder developed his own strand of Euro disco, particularly with his production of Donna Summer's 1977 seminal 'I Feel Love'. By the time Dillemoth arrived in Chicago at the tail end of the 1980s at the peak of Chicago's house scene, itself then already a cottage industry, the futurity of the music that was being produced was firmly established.

Dillemoth designed the *Diskodekorationen* as proposals and adornments for the social space of the disco or the nightclub. As such, they do not easily settle into any particularly defined style or medium as art but rather are closer in form to the elasticity of music itself or the musicality of repetition, movement and the erotics of dancing. Perhaps most obviously, the circular form represents the disco ball or the vinyl record. They could also be seen as voyeuristic peepholes or portals into a dance scene from an outside perspective. Several series incorporate mirrors together with self-reflective and acerbic statements. Scratched into their painted surfaces in *So and soso...* (1988), for instance, are various defeatisms that speak to being an artist, such as 'I am so unsuccessful' or 'I am so lonely'. Elsewhere, three refashioned Plexiglas covered pedestals (*Disko*, 1989/2019) contain miniature models for discos, affixed with the names of popular UK clubs. Roaming the space meanwhile, *Parallaxis Disconiensis: Clown or Clone?* (2017), a plaster cast of the artist's head atop a self-driving pedestal surveys the works in the exhibition robotically – the Latin extension in its title is usually used when classifying discoveries of fossilized remains.

Moving from Germany to the US, and immersing himself in Chicago's house music scene, Dillemoth's "crummy non-elastic whiteness" was decontextualized, or removed from, the influence and scrutiny of a predominantly localized painting discourse in which he was previously making work. Not long after returning to the Rhineland and moving to Cologne, the artist subsequently started Friesenwall 120, which he co-ran with Josef Strau, Nils Norman and later Kiron Khosla and Merlin Carpenter. Dillemoth first showed the *Diskodekorationen* at Künstlerhaus Graz in 2017. What distinguishes the historical from the 'contemporary' when work defined by a specific time, geographic regionalism and bohemian tropes of self-image is temporally dragged from another century?

Work list

Clockwise around the space:

Blumen (1989)

Wood, Plexiglass, Fabric

So and soso... (1988)

Series of 6

Glass, Wood, Mirror, Photographs

Blumen (1989)

Wood, Plexiglass, Fabric

Blumen (1989)

Wood, Plexiglass, Fabric

Blumen (1989)

Wood, Plexiglas, Fabric

Blumen (1989)

Wood, Plexiglas, Fabric

Deine Arbeit (1988)

Series of 4

Wood, PVD, Mirror, Dry Transfer Lettering

Eure Politik (1988)

Series of 3

Glass, Wood Veneer, Adhesive Stickers

In the middle of the space:

Disko (Trash) (1989/2019)

Disko (Mojos) (1989/2019)

Disko (Gatecrasher) (1989/2019)

Plexiglas, Wood, Mylar, Lighters, Candles, Sugar Cubes, Chicken Bones

Parallaxis Disconiensis: Clown or Clone? (2017)

Plaster, Self-driving pedestal

Downstairs:

Happy Hours (1988)

Video documentation of Super 8 film loops at Lothringer 13, Munich on 3 November 1988

Translations

So and soso... (1988)

‘Ich bin so erfolglos’ (I am so unsuccessful)

‘Ich bin so depressiv’ (I am so depressed)

‘Ich bin so traurig’ (I am so sad)

‘Ich bin so enttäuscht’ (I am so disappointed)

‘Ich bin so einsam’ (I am so lonely)

Deine Arbeit (1988)

‘Proletarisch und Alkoholkrank’ (Proletarian and alcoholic)

‘Proletarisch oder nur blöd?’ (Proletarian or just stupid?)

‘Proletarisch, Bürgerlich, Verkommen’ (Proletarian, Commoner, Reprobate)

‘Proletarisch, total unter Drogen’ (Proletarian, totally drugged)