



PRESS RELEASE

10 January 2017

Thomas Mailaender: The Fun Archive

With *The Fun Archive* the NRW-Forum Düsseldorf will be presenting the first major retrospective of Thomas Mailaender in Germany. The French artist collects artefacts of cyber culture – anonymous amateur photographs, Internet memes and cyber trash – that he archives, processes and channels into the world of high culture. From 3 February to 30 April 2017 he will be opening his *Fun Archive* at the NRW-Forum Düsseldorf and will be constructing spectacular room installations.

The multimedia artist has been working on the constantly growing *Fun Archive* for more than 15 years. It is a personal collection and database of bizarre, unsuccessful and curious images and items of everyday culture that he finds on the internet and at flea markets. He has now archived more than 11,000 found objects, which he processes and 'recycles' by means of various, frequently photographic, techniques. In this way he channels the objects that he has found into the art world and elevates things that are trashy, amateurish and folksy to the status of high culture, whose legitimisation strategies he humorously breaks. He ironizes the art world just the same as the banal and the everyday and, at the same time, manifests humour and entertainment as categories of art.

The *Fun Archive Headquarter* is a walkable room installation, an abandoned building somewhere between a bunker and a cave, full of grotesque, confusing and curious images, which the internet is full of and which should be preserved for future generations. The headquarters of "WTF", a barely fathomable survey of our culture, will be constructed specifically for the exhibition at the NRW-Forum Düsseldorf and will give the most comprehensive insight to date into the surreal and weird images of the *Fun Archive*, whose humour seems so familiar and banal to us and, at the same time, affects and touches us most disconcertingly.



Thomas Mailaender has developed various techniques with which he transfers the collected images from the *Fun Archive* into the tradition of art. For the *Cyanotypes* series he worked with the oldest photographic printing process - cyanotype. He printed out digital images from the internet and photographed them in order to obtain a negative that he then once again reproduced as a cyanotype print. The absurdly funny content of the 'original' digital images fades and gives way to surreal images and auratic individual prints that ironically play with decorative patterns and the history of photography.

For the *Handicraft* series he processed Internet images on ceramic handicrafts – grotesque failed photographs on unsuccessful art handicrafts.

Illustrated People is a documentation of a performance in which he placed original negatives from the collection of the Archive of Modern Conflict on to the skin of individuals and then irradiated it with a UV lamp. This caused a positive image to appear on the bodies of the models. In the *No Pain No Gain* series he went one step further by tattooing himself and his models with the word *Fun*.



Thomas Mailaender was born in 1979. He lives and works in Paris. His works are shown internationally in solo and group exhibitions, among others, at Roman Road, London (2015) and the Festival Images, Vevey, Switzerland (2014). Several books about his works have been published and, in 2015, his publication "Illustrated People" (AMC/RVB books) was selected by the Paris Photo – Aperture Foundation PhotoBook Award as the PhotoBook of the Year.

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NRW-Forum Düsseldorf

Duration: 03.02 - 30.04.2017

Opening: 02.02.2017, 7 pm

Press preview: 02.02.2017, 11 am

Press images: www.nrw-forum.de/presse/thomas-mailaender

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