

The Wall, Nina Kurtela

Gallery Događanja, Zagreb 2016

Text by Josipa Bubaš

Nina Kurtela visits Berlin galleries and photographs their walls. Renown museums, commercial galleries as well as temporary exhibition spaces outside the popular artistic trajectories are the focus of the author's interests. In response to the flood of artistic content in which there are significant variations in the quality, the artist simply documents empty, white walls.

Kurtela consistently visits numerous sites and records parts of their display walls. Visiting, whitening, documenting, this whole process of the creation of the work is similar to the anthropological research. It is precisely these connotations that strengthen the social aspect of the work, and confirm the author's interest in social, transformative, processual, spatial. Clean and clear in the idea, the work functions in several directions: it can be read as a historical document, as well as an overview of the Berlin exhibition spaces during the period of commercialization and as an insight into the artistic commodification of once iconic Berlin, twenty years after the destruction of the wall. These documents are silent when it comes to content and function as a sketch of absence. Also, *the white cube*, a white gallery cube, parallel to the nominal neutrality, reflects the institutional convention of art institutions of power, which are still dominated by *the white male*. Everything else is still only, it seems, exotic variations on the theme, just like the deviations displayed in Kurtela's work. The formal quality of each photo yields a different texture: not all whites are equally white, on them we read traces of setup, brush strokes, stains of dilapidation. References of a white surface in the history of art are numerous, and in their basis is a tendency for purification, whiteness, zero point of art. In this sense, the artist ignores content: cultural offer, quantity and quality of the Berlin gallery/museum scene, and she reduces it to its basic elements, neutralizes and thus equals it. The fact that despite the equalization, each wall still carries its own signature on which is written what to the observer remains unseen, testifies in favor of diversity in equality, the difference in repetition. By rhythmic repetition of essence, external conditions offer us minimum differences on which then different socio-economic contexts are inscribed. In this work they are intentionally concealed, and their whiteness like the white paper leaves us the possibility of inscribing our own interpretations.