

Meliksetian MB Briggs

frieze

Johannes Wohnseifer

Linn Lühn, Düsseldorf, Germany

Some people say that extraordinary names can influence the course of a life. A common name like Peter is less likely to be predetermining. The material Johannes Wohnseifer presents at Linn Lühn in his solo show, 'More in Common Than a Given Name', suggests a curious tie between two men with no obvious connection except for their first names – English racecar driver Peter Revson and German artist Peter Brüning. Though Wohnseifer is known for his paintings that deal with mass media, none of his painting can be found in the show. Instead, the material in the exhibition stems from Wohnseifer's personal archive: a series of press photographs recounting the short but glamorous biography of racecar driver and ladies man Peter Revson, paired with graphic works, ephemera and books by artist Peter Brüning.



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Personal collections often reveal more about their collector than about the collected objects, which seems to be true here. Wohnseifer's selection, acquired mainly through eBay, shows how the act of image browsing, searching, purchasing and collecting is not merely research but part of the process of making. As with any worthwhile collection, the search is as important as the final acquisition. Wohnseifer's pursuit is fuelled by an ongoing fascination with Revson. Displayed here are two editions of the sportsman's biography, *Speed with Style*, published in 1974, which has also featured in Wohnseifer's earlier works. In archival images, we see that Revson, the charismatic heir to the Revlon cosmetic dynasty, is not shy in assuming the well-tread iconography of the racecar driver. We can observe him concentrating before the race, in the race stall with his mechanics, or on the way to a party with his Miss America girlfriend, Marjorie Wallace.

Delivering every pose in the handbook, his life is traced in paparazzi shots until his premature death in a practice run for the 1974 South African Grand Prix in Kyalami. Many of the photographs bear the markings of the red pen of the picture editor, spotting crop lines and notes added during the publishing process.

A similar pattern of lines and edits can be found in the works of Peter Brüning. Especially the late work of the artist, dedicated to the grammar of modern traffic, is satiated with such markings. Brüning's work embarked on a concentrated engagement with the vocabulary of traffic and its ramifications on the German landscape in the 1960s, a genre that he coined as the 'trafficscape'. By stripping traffic down to the fundamental outlines of its signage, cartography and pictograms, he discovered a language that complied

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with his desire to rise above the dialectic between the abstract and the concrete. In the years before his early death in 1970, he translated this 'semantic art' into spatial arrangements, most famously in his memorial for the motorway from 1967 at the A1 in Wuppertal. One of his iconic images, *Kölner Schule des 20. Jahrhunderts* (1969), is an edited motorway sign in which the lanes on the sign have been crossed out with red markings to inform the passing driver about the revisions to the system road. They reveal traffic as an organism in constant flux, a language that continuously reformulates itself alongside the rapid expansion of modern transport infrastructure as we know it.

Wohnseifer's show presents less a cohesive argument about why these two men should be considered in comparison and more of a glimpse into the artist's own head and the pattern of his interests and inspirations. It is a study that relies on free association and the seemingly random connections that emerge from it. Wohnseifer's own work is the missing link: in works like *Kapelle* (2004), Peter and Peter's in uence becomes patent. The poster for 'More in Common Than a Given Name' is a digitally altered screen grab from Wohnseifer's desktop that depicts him on eBay, searching for the name Peter. The search engine's suggestive memory prompts two Peters, Revson and Brüning, con rming that the link is not in the Peters but in the determined focus of Wohnseifer's universe.

-Anna Gritz