

ARTFORUM

Johannes Wohnseifer

MUSEUM LUDWIG, COLOGNE

1999

To get to Johannes Wohnseifer's recent exhibition, which was curated by Rita Kersting and housed in the project room of the Museum Ludwig Köln, one had to pass through the permanent collection; in the middle of Pop Art, one came up against a white nylon curtain on which "MUSEUM" was written in huge black type. Pushing the curtain aside, one entered a large room only to stop at the sight of sixteen square wood panels laid across the floor (each approximately 6.5 by 6.5 feet) and painted in colorful monochromes. The luminosity of the panels initially caused even the Carl Andre-seasoned visitor to step back for a moment before venturing inside. Set up amid the panels were three pedestals of various sizes on which the artist presented, under Plexiglas, prototypes for the sneakers he developed in collaboration with Adidas. In combination with three paintings of eagles based on pictures by Gerhard Richter (some of which were made for Marcel Broodthaers's 1968–72 *Musée d'Art Modern, Département des Aigles*) and extracts from On Kawara's journal that were dated 1967 (the year Wohnseifer was born), it became clear that the exhibition was about more than being just another variation of the now-exhausted art of crossovers, in this case between (sport) design and art.

The panels' colors (medium green, lilac, blue, light blue, yellow, and orange) quote Otl Alcher's color scheme for the 1972 Olympic games in Munich, a palette meant to radiate calm and help banish the dark shadows of the previous staging of the games in Germany, in 1936 in Berlin. Collective and private memory fuse in this installation to form a thick web of references (Wohnseifer counts the interruption of the broadcast of the Munich games to cover the terrorist attack as his first memory of television). Similarly connected are the writings about private and public occurrences extracted from Kawara's journals, which Wohnseifer presents in enlarged form on white nylon, highlighting a few of them in yellow or magenta. The quotes range from "NEW YORK STATE'S NEW DIVORCE LAW FECTIONE [sic] TODAY" to "WE

Meliksetian MB Briggs

REJECT WE RESIGN” and end with Kawara’s observation “I STILL HAVE A PAIN IN MY EYES.”

Through his museum-style presentation of the sneakers and recourse to Kawara and Broodthaers, Wohnseifer insinuates himself into the long genealogy of institutional critique. And just as he refuses to privilege or even distinguish between personal experience and the affairs of state, he freely conflates sports and current art history in an installation that interrogates, with humor and ironic distance, the purpose and function of the museum. High and low unite, and the light-footedness of the glamorous sneakers perched for show becomes an effective metaphor for (real and conceptual) movement in the museum.

—Yilmaz Dziewior