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Red Stars and Text Clouds. Brigitte Waldach's Spatial Drawings on the RAF

Disturbed and fascinated, spellbound and irritated, observers stand before the works of Brigitte Waldach like the figures of her images. For years now, her drawings have reached beyond the page and extended into the space. The inclusion of sound and language creates a temporal structure, causing the multidimensional arrangements to seem like stages permeated by reality and imagination. By moving through image and text, the observer becomes part of the performance.

Brigitte Waldach tempers the complexity triggered by the mesh of media by isolating her motifs, giving them clear contours and filling them with monochrome crimson paint. According to the artist, it is “very important to create a surface that remains sensual and seductive.”¹ She thus draws the public into her visual world, encouraging it to deal with complex contents and enigmatic scenes.

The colour red functions as a signal – and with its deep carmine shade – less for love or eroticism than blood. Indeed, Brigitte Waldach confirms that murder mystery and horror films influenced her choice of colour.² Her work cycle *sichtung rot* [“searching red”] has been ongoing since 2002 and comprises drawings, silk screens, foils, photographs, films and installations.

In working with the colour red it was inevitable that the artist would also confront its revolutionary symbolism. Inspired by the natural phenomena of sunrise and sunset, the 19th century labour movement rallied beneath the red flag, and via the Russian Bolsheviks and their Red Army the symbolic tradition made its way to the West German Red Army Faction (RAF).

I

Published on May 22, 1970, the manifesto *Build Up the Red Army* is considered to be the first public statement by the militant group initially described by the media as the “Baader-Mahler-Meinhof-Group”. This was followed in April 1971 by the 14-page white paper *Red Army Faction: The Concept of the Urban Guerilla*. Their signet was a five-pointed star crossed by a machine gun aimed towards the right.

Graphic designer Holm von Czettritz once explained that he had been asked to rework the logo by Andreas Baader, who lived in concealment until his arrest on June 1, 1972. As a “brand creator” Czettritz maintained that the imperfect, stencil-like image was much better suited to embody the RAF “corporate identity.”³

¹ Brigitte Waldach in conversation with Eleonora Garavello, in: *Juliet*, No. 143, June 2009, p. 56.

² Brigitte Waldach in conversation with the author, Berlin, 6 November 2009.

³ Nike Breyer in conversation with Holm von Czettritz, *die tageszeitung*, 12 April 2003, Supplement. See Also Rolf Sachsse, “Pentagramm hinter deutscher Maschinenpistole unter Russisch Brot. Zur Semiosphäre der Erinnerung an die Rote Armee Fraktion,” in: *Der “Deutsche Herbst” und die RAF in Politik, Medien und Kunst. Nationale und internationale Perspektiven*, ed. Nicole Colin, Beatrice de Graaf, Jacco Pekelder and Joachim Umlauf (Bielefeld: transcript, 2008), 131-140.

The members' media savvy was highly developed. The images of Hanns-Martin Schleyer, President of the German Employers' Association, who was abducted on September 5, 1977, function as contemporary emblems. The RAF logo as title or *inscriptio*, the portrayal of the person as image (*pictura*) and underneath the explanatory text (*subscriptio*) – in this case the words “Prisoner of the RAF” and the respective date. Publicized as both photographs and film, the orchestration was transmitted over televisions into the living rooms of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The history of the RAF culminated in October 1977 with the foiled attempt to effect the release of imprisoned RAF members by hijacking an airplane in Mogadishu; when RAF protagonists Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and Jan-Carl Raspe were found dead in their prison cells at Stuttgart-Stammheim; and when the Employers' Association President was murdered in retaliation.

Anyone who was politically socialized in the 1970s was influenced by these events. Two films at the time captured the nation's zeitgeist. *Germany in Autumn*, a group production by 11 directors consisting of short documentaries as well as fiction films, premiered in February 1978. The film title gave a name to the past events that associated both melancholy and mourning with the natural cycle of destruction. A corresponding frequent expression of the times was the term “late capitalist state”.

Shortly thereafter, a feature film summed up the decade perfectly. “Margarethe von Trotta's film *Die bleierne Zeit* was of great importance to me,” explains Brigitte Waldach. “It influenced my political thought more than my childhood memories of the media reports from autumn 1977.”⁴ At the time the artist was only 11 years old; she was 15 when she saw the film.

Director Margarethe von Trotta took her title from an unfinished poem by Friedrich Hölderlin⁵ to characterize the rigid and authoritarian climate of the 1950s in which the future RAF members were raised. By the time the film was awarded the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, the term had become a part of common speech, with the double meaning of “bleierne” [“leaden”] pointing both to the paralysis and stagnation of society as well as to the bullets used and received by the extremist RAF.

The film *Die bleierne Zeit* portrays in the protagonists Juliane and Marianne the lives of Christiane and Gudrun Ensslin. Children of an art-loving protestant minister in Swabia (southern Germany), both sisters became involved with the student protest movement, but then went separate ways. As a journalist Christiane championed the women's rights movement and co-founded the feminist magazine *Emma*. Gudrun trained as an elementary school teacher, started a dissertation on writer Hans Henny Jahnn and looked to poet Else Lasker-Schüler as a role model.⁶ Between 1967 and 1968 she turned to militant activism and was jailed for her participation in the arson of two Frankfurt department stores.

⁴ Brigitte Waldach, quoted by Henrike Thomsen in “Mit dem Rotstift der Geschichte,” in: *die tageszeitung*, 15 August 2008, p. 24. Translator's note: *The German Sisters* is the official English film; a literal translation would be “The Leaden Times”.

⁵ Friedrich Hölderlin, “Der Gang aufs Land” (1800), in: *Sämtliche Gedichte. Studienausgabe in zwei Bänden*, ed. Detlev Lüders (Bad Homburg: Athenäum, 1970), Vol. 1, pp. 285 f.

⁶ Paul Karalus (1979), quoted in Gerd Koenen, *Vesper, Ensslin, Baader. Urszenen der RAF* (Köln: Kiepenheuer + Witsch, 2003), pp. 120, 99.

In 1981, Christiane Ensslin was actively involved in the production of Margarethe von Trotta's film and together with her brother Gottfried in 2005 published the letters that Gudrun Ensslin wrote to them while in prison from 1972 to 1973.⁷

II

This book became a critical source for Brigitte Waldach, not only for the text, but also for its central imagery. Two photographs from the book are the basis for her image of Gudrun Ensslin in profile and that of Christiane Ensslin walking towards the observer.⁸ In a large format, three-part drawing (fig. p. ###), a maximum distance between the two sisters exemplifies their disparity; text is the element that binds them. A band of communication runs from Gudrun to Christiane, not merely because of the western habitude of writing from left to right, but also because only the letters of Gudrun were available, while the letters Christiane sent to the prison "have disappeared and their content are reflected only in Gudrun's answers."⁹

Thus it is Gudrun Ensslin who speaks in the picture. Brigitte Waldach made two modifications to the original. A blindfold that might otherwise suggest blindness points here to Gudrun's solitary confinement, during which the prisoner had no eye contact with other prisoners, even during recess in the prison yard. Also, the image of her walking is cut off at the drawing's edge, which can be seen as her abandonment of the social space. The prison-garbed subject has turned her back to her sister dressed in everyday civilian clothing, and is in relentless pursuit of the left.

The sentences Gudrun Ensslin addressed to her sister function on various levels. Directly overhead reads "The passion of freedom, the insight, you yourself, here and now, the action"¹⁰ – formulations of fulfilment in an attempt to politically persuade her younger sister. Somewhat lower in the image, the question "Where does it come from?" references the publication of excerpts from Gudrun's letters to Christiane in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* newspaper. The author can imagine that information was passed through the censor, yet also suspects her sister of being naive and warns: "Don't you know that they are always at least inaccurate, and inaccuracy is most often tailored."¹¹ Finally at the bottom of the picture is evidence of her emotional state: "Hare and hedgehog, me and the cold. And I'll soon be a dog. Every day I run 4 to 5 hours back and forth in the cell (5 steps) just so as not to freeze."¹²

Gudrun Ensslin's textual output oscillates between personal emotion, precise analysis and political agitation, and in Waldach's illustrative representation the levels overlap into a zone of illegibility. In the triptych's middle part consisting purely of text, one sentence lower down in the image receives particular emphasis: "I did indeed see your insanely curious look as I disappeared."¹³ This is surrounded by a somewhat later paraphrase: "that I did indeed notice your look burning in curiosity, when after a visit I disappeared with the guard down the long hallway."¹⁴ In this middle part, the gaze and disappearing are present only in text. On the

⁷ Gudrun Ensslin, "Zieht den Trennungsstrich, jede Minute." *Briefe an ihre Schwester Christiane und ihren Bruder Gottfried aus dem Gefängnis 1972-1973*, ed. Christiane Ensslin and Gottfried Ensslin (Hamburg: Konkret Literatur Verlag, 2005).

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 156, 161.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 83. Here and in the following quotations from German sources have been translated for this essay.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

triptych's left panel, Gudrun's figure is depicted disappearing at far left; on the right panel, the gaze is positioned on the right, where Christiane Ensslin can look out above the edges of the text. "Look here", stands expressively beneath her, "You say that you feel 'small and aggressive' when the gate is closed – do you know that this could be the most concise expression for what *Poverty in the Federal Republic of Germany* states across who knows how many pages?"¹⁵ The subsequent passage in the original letter states: "This is what happens when before one's very eyes one is declassified, denounced, impossibly treated and is forced to watch this, as mentioned, completely impotent".¹⁶ By placing the text cloud over the figure's mouth, Brigitte Waldach visualizes the sense of stifling described in the text. The word "Durchblick" ["view"] is printed near Gudrun, but her eyes are covered. Christiane on the other hand is able to stand witness to the events with eyes open, literally.

The three-part drawing *Gudrun und Christiane* ["Gudrun and Christiane"] was realized in 2009 and continues motifs that Brigitte Waldach developed in the year prior to the exhibition *Drei Farben – ROT* ["Three Colours – RED"] in Potsdam.¹⁷ As a final part of an exhibition trilogy inspired by the French tricolour and the tenets of the French Revolution, the notion of "fraternity" was the point of departure for the show's curatorial concept. Brigitte Waldach used the occasion to search for "sorority" within the framework of revolutionary politics.

For the exhibition, Brigitte Waldach drew directly on the walls, floor and ceiling of a room on the top floor of Villa Kellermann in Potsdam (fig. p. ###). "Passages from the letters to Christiane penetrate the hermetic exhibition space in a deep red. The red tones differentiate the letter fragments from the books (in light red) that Gudrun Ensslin had her sister Christiane bring her in prison. The list of books she requested included literary, philosophical as well as political texts, including Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of Family*, Franz Kafka's *The Hunger Artist*, poems by Ezra Pound, dramas by Jean Genet and the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* by Ludwig Wittgenstein."¹⁸ Ten loudspeakers were mounted on the walls and connected with red cables, creating lines of perspective throughout the room. The technical aspect of the work was integrated into its aesthetics. "At first glance, one could imagine being at the scene of a crime," comments one reviewer. "Yet what seems to be blood spatters in the white room proves to be text: quotes [...] overlap like the voices whispering from the loudspeakers. A delicately drawn woman glides between them, a red star."¹⁹

The star boldly suggests unambiguity. This, however, is offset by the "text clouds" – the term used by the artist to describe her concentrated patches of writing. The wavering letters are characteristic of her RAF drawings. The uncertainty this might evoke is absolutely intentional. According to the artist, a loss of equilibrium is also symptomatic of solitary confinement. In addition to the three dimensional variation *Gudrun und Christiane II* ["Gudrun and Christiane II"] conceived for Art Brussels²⁰ the artist realized the triptych *Deutscher Herbst* ["German Autumn"] (fig. p. ###) that was shown in the same year at art forum berlin. Here, the figures move between tree trunks and printed beside a red star in

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 59. *Armut in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* [*Poverty in the Federal Republic of Germany*] is the title of a book published in 1971 by Jürgen Roth included on Gudrun Ensslin's book list. See *ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁷ *XV. Rohkunstbau: Drei Farben – ROT*, Exhibition Catalogue, ed. Arvid Boellert (Berlin 2008: Schiler), pp. 18, 30, 96-99, 127.

¹⁸ Brigitte Waldach, *Gudrun und Christiane, die deutschen Schwestern*, 2008. See *Brigitte Waldach: site specific*, Exhibition Catalogue, Copenhagen: Galleri Bo Bjerggaard, unpaginated.

¹⁹ Henrike Thomsen, "Brigitte Waldach", *Monopol*, 9/2001, p. 44.

²⁰ See image in Exhibition Catalogue *Brigitte Waldach: site specific*.

uppercase letters are the words “DER MYTHOS IST EINE MASCHINE” [“THE MYTH IS A MACHINE”].²¹

The term “myth” links to a discussion that dominated German media in summer 2003. Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin planned a project with the working title “Mythos RAF.” A quarter-century after the “German Autumn” and five years after the written voluntary dissolution of the RAF, today’s “younger generation” – only familiar with the “ghosts of Baader, Meinhof and Ensslin” as quotations from “random artifacts from popular culture,”²² – should be informed of the historical context and media echo of the RAF. Inadvertently, the massive knee-jerk reaction to the planned exhibition made quite clear just how much “the RAF phenomenon had been personalized, then dehistoricized and thereby mythified.”²³ Felix Ensslin was one of the curators of the exhibition, which was finally realized in 2005 under the title *Zur Vorstellung des Terrors* [*Regarding Terror: The RAF Exhibition*]. In her installation in Potsdam, Brigitte Waldach allows her text clouds to dissipate with Gudrun Ensslin’s request for photographs of Andreas Baader and “in addition maybe two of Felix. Felix isn’t an RAF member. Felix is my son”.²⁴

The RAF protagonists achieved tragic celebrity. Brigitte Waldach reflects on this in her diptych *Famous* from 2009 (fig. p. ###). Here the red star of the RAF is reinterpreted into a star cult symbol akin to Hollywood’s Walk of Fame. Here one can read the fundamental ambivalence of signs demanding interpretation: star or star, notorious or famous?

“Irrstern des Tages” [“The day’s erring star”] begins the text cloud that drifts by in the upper right corner of “Famous.” The phrase derives from one of Friedrich Hölderlin’s “Nachtgesängen” [“Night Songs”].²⁵ The star on the floor sets the stage. The performers here are not the Ensslin sisters, but rather Berlin actress Fritzi Haberlandt. In 2007 Waldach developed a series of photographs with her, that together as “Trailer”²⁶ allude to a compressed filmic event. In the work *Heimatfilm* that was produced around the same time,²⁷ Fritzi Haberlandt is depicted wearing a 1940’s style dress reminiscent of the childhood smock mentioned by Gudrun Ensslin in a letter to her sister.²⁸ In the *Famous* diptych the same figure appears at all five of the star’s points – indicative of the monological nature of Gudrun Ensslin’s solitary confinement.

III

There are five major monologues in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Their common theme is paternal conflict that despite reflection does not lead to a final action. Brigitte Waldach illustrates this structure in the work *Fathers* from 2008 (fig. p. ###). To underline the futility of effort she

²¹ Heiner Müller stated with reference to his play *Hamletmaschine*: “Myth is a unit, a machine, onto which ever new and different machines can be attached,” in: Heiner Müller, *Shakespeare Factory 2* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1989), p. 229.

²² Klaus Biesenbach, “Engel der Geschichte oder Den Schrecken anderer betrachten oder Bilder in den Zeiten des Terrors”, in: *Zur Vorstellung des Terrors: Die RAF-Ausstellung*, ed. Klaus Biesenbach, Exhibition Catalogue, KW Institute for Contemporary Art (Berlin: Steidl, 2005), Vol. 2, pp. 11-15, here pp. 12 f.

²³ Joachim Baur, “Geschichtsschreibung im Feuilleton. Anmerkungen zur Debatte um ‘Mythos RAF,’” in: *ibid.*, pp. 241-244, here pp. 243 f. See also Felix Ensslin, “Die doppelte Verdrängung,” in: *Die Zeit*, No. 13, 22 March 2007, p. 5.

²⁴ Ensslin, “*Zieht den Trennungsstrich, jede Minute*“, loc. cit., pp. 36 f.

²⁵ Friedrich Hölderlin, “Chiron” (1802/03), in: *Sämtliche Gedichte*, loc. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 256 f.

²⁶ Brigitte Waldach, *Trailer*, Exhibition Catalogue, Galerie DNA Berlin (Heidelberg: Kehrer, 2007).

²⁷ *Neue Heimat. Berlin Contemporary*, ed. Ursula Prinz, Exhibition Catalogue, Berlinische Galerie (Bielefeld: Kerber, 2007/08), pp. 130-133.

²⁸ Ensslin, “*Zieht den Trennungsstrich, jede Minute*“, loc. cit., p. 56.

quotes a classic of absurdity, Samuel Beckett, whose statement “A late evening in the future” introduces the image.²⁹ Hamlet’s voice is portrayed in dark red, that of his stepfather in middle red, the ghost of his father in light red. The piece concludes with the final sentence of the dying Hamlet: “The rest is silence”.³⁰ In between, five sportive men are entangled with their textual roles. The five women portrayed in *Mothers* (2009, fig. p. ###) do not fare much better. As table dancers they stumble head over heels into the texts. Here as well, Hamlet’s words are written in dark red, the passages by his mother Gertrude are in middle red, while those of his beloved Ophelia appear in light red.

With *Romeo and Juliet* Brigitte Waldach again chose a Shakespeare piece as point of departure for an own work. At a gallery in Amsterdam she addressed “experiences from other possible worlds that can no longer be portrayed. In the large format drawings, male and female figures appear in transitional spaces between retreat and reality. In the spatial illustration with sound *Inland – love loop* the figures have already gone and are only audibly perceptible as voices. Point of departure for the work is Shakespeare’s tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*. The great love that prematurely ends thus evades the stagnation of the everyday – thereby sparing the lovers from an otherwise tragic development. The dramatic text culminates in the last room of the gallery in a shimmering textual horizon that girdles the room at eye level. For *Inland – love loop* German film music composer Jörg Rausch created a minimalistic sound structure that concentrates for long stretches on a single tone. The juxtaposition of dramatic text, contemporary sound structure and actual film dialogue releases the drama from its historical context into the medial presence of eternal recurrence.”³¹

By combining text, image and sound, Brigitte Waldach uses a media structure characteristic of theatre and film. Indeed, cinematic references are particularly numerous in her work. For the work *Inland* for example, dialogues from David Lynch’s film *Inland Empire* are quoted equally alongside texts by William Shakespeare.

Gudrun Ensslin also expressed great interest in film as she wrote her sister in a letter from November 23, 1972 of her thoughts on art and aesthetics. After describing the path from a classical-idealistic notion of art to a materialist art perspective based on Karl Marx, her pen ran out of black ink, so she continued with red: “So, what role for art remains after all that? To enlighten, of course. And here one must differentiate fraud from reality. This, in turn, leads to practice, consequently and more or less considered and executed without corruption. Again a problem, especially when one likes the problems more than the (always less comfortable) solution. Godard is dealing with this right now, ‘young’ film in general is. And of course enlightenment in the sense of class-consciousness is an important task; but vernissages are the agora of the masters and not the site of the servants’ enlightenment, anyway. And it is also clear that the practice of making a good, insightful, consciousness-raising film presupposes the conscious practice of social being, its requirements, its mutability – this is very different from that famous intellectual awareness of problems – the playing field, the reserve of the intellectuals.”³²

²⁹ Samuel Beckett, “Krapp’s Last Tape,” in: *Das letzte Band. La dernière bande. Krapp’s Last Tape* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), p. 51.

³⁰ William Shakespeare, “Hamlet”, in: *The London Shakespeare. A new annotated and critical edition of the complete works in six volumes edited by the late John Munro* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1958), Vol. 5, p. 569.

³¹ Brigitte Waldach, “Inland,” unpublished text.

³² Ensslin, “*Zieht den Trennungsstrich, jede Minute*“, loc. cit., p. 75.

Gudrun Ensslin argues from a position that presumes to know the truth behind the appearance of social blindness, and thus assigns art an agitational role. Brigitte Waldach on the other hand, addresses the multivalences of personality structures, the ambivalence of language and image, the complex relationships of exchange and blending, also between the fields of politics and art.

What joins Shakespeare's dramas and the RAF is their confrontation with the parents' generation and power as well as the question of how to put insight into action. "Hamlet is a typical German hero,"³³ comments Brigitte Waldach, and the RAF members took his timeless declaration "to be or not to be" in an existential sense to heart.

IV

The question of being or not-being can also be applied to images, especially to photographs. Astrid Proll, photojournalist and former RAF member,³⁴ marks the start of the RAF as September 10, 1969, when the German Federal Supreme Court dismissed the appeal in the department store arson trial and Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin decided to go underground instead of receiving their sentence: "At that moment we saw black – we entered the darkness, if you will. [...] That's why the crossover into art was mandatory, in a way. This empty space – this blank film – is an invitation to art. It is attractive and must be occupied."³⁵

Brigitte Waldach takes on this challenge. Her drawings are not necessarily "visual bombs,"³⁶ as one critic put it. Rather, the near-chaotic centrifugality of explosion is parried by Brigitte Waldach's linear textual order. "For a long time, film references played a dominant role in my work, but now I am more interested again in literature and philosophy,"³⁷ explains the artist, who was a German Studies major under Reinhard Baumgart at the Technical University in Berlin before she switched to the University of the Arts in 1996 into the master class of Georg Baselitz.

This combination is evident in the central importance given to texts in Waldach's drawings. The interplay of dense writing and an almost Asian void in the empty parts elicits a tension that is heightened by the emphasis of certain sentences while others remain illegible. "There are traces, not messages," comments Brigitte Waldach, who explains her approach as "a nearly automatic process of writing and creating that, which is visible as text."³⁸ Some text passages are selected randomly at the turn of a page, while in other cases a very systematic selection takes place.

Current developments in the artist's work are evident in the use of additional text colours, for example when the poem cycle *Les fleurs du mal* by Charles Baudelaire wafts like a fragrant bouquet in red, green and blue above a seated male figure (fig. p. ###). Or when the artist considers modulating her straight horizontal lines to assume the form of a gathering storm wave – inspired by Hermann Melville's *Moby Dick*, which in turn was used by the RAF prisoners as code names: Andreas Baader became Captain Ahab while Gudrun Ensslin called herself "Smutje" ["Fleece"], for "the cook keeps the pots clean as a mirror and preaches

³³ Brigitte Waldach in conversation with the author, Berlin, 6 November 2009.

³⁴ Astrid Proll, *Hans und Grete. Bilder der RAF 1967-1977. Aktualisierte und erweiterte Neuauflage* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2004).

³⁵ "Das ist doch nicht die RAF. Das ist doch ein Liebespaar!" Astrid Proll in conversation with Peter Unfried, in: *die tageszeitung*, 28 January 2005, p. 13.

³⁶ Shaheen Merali, "Redrum! Redrum! Brigitte Waldach," in: *Sleek*, Autumn 2007, pp. 192-196, here p. 194.

³⁷ Brigitte Waldach in conversation with the author, Berlin, 6 November 2009.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

against the sharks”³⁹ (This was preceded by Grimm’s *Hänsel und Gretel*, with Baader as Hans and Ensslin as Gretel). A third direction taken by the artist is an installation that does without writing altogether, visualizing the “German Autumn” theme with a swarm of red coloured plastic oak leaves that is complemented by voices and other sounds (fig. p. ###). Text is still present in this work as well, and this is what makes Brigitte Waldach’s RAF works so unique.

This aspect was developed during her work on *Trailer*. Along with single words, tally marks or graffiti, a foreign text in the artist’s handwriting first appeared on a page showing a woman in the room, whose far wall is covered in writing. Like a teacher standing before a chalkboard, the woman starts to speak, but the comic-like text cloud does not contain words but is filled with the colour red (fig. p. ###). The background is actually a presentation of a chapter from Jean Baudrillard’s book *The Perfect Crime*, in maximum density.

The text begins with the thesis: “So the world then, is a radical illusion.”⁴⁰ According to the philosopher the illusion is indestructible and reality remains only a product of simulation: “Over against the subject, that indomitable producer of meaning, stands the world, that inexhaustible producer of illusion,” writes Baudrillard, “Our culture of meaning is collapsing beneath the excess of meaning,” the consequence of the “sign and reality sharing a single shroud.”⁴¹

Based on this, the drawings of Brigitte Waldach can be understood as a representation of the implosion of messages. Too much text renders comprehension impossible. The permanence of the message becomes a communication deadlock. Unavailing activism, speaking without saying a word – a diagnosis of the times in the form of a drawing. According to Baudrillard, “The artist is also always close to the perfect crime, which is: to say nothing. But he runs away from it, and his work is the trace of this criminal imperfection. The artist is, according to Michaux, the one who resists with all his might the fundamental urge to not leave traces.”⁴²

³⁹ See Stefan Aust, *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex. Neuauflage* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 2008), pp. 390-395, here p. 391; Gerd Koenen, *Vesper*, pp. 317 ff.

⁴⁰ Jean Baudrillard, “Die radikale Illusion”, in: *Das perfekte Verbrechen* (München: Matthes & Seitz, 1996), pp. 33-37, here p. 33.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 11.