

21er Raum

Barbara Kapusta *They She We Them*

May 24 —
June 23, 2013

They She We Them is a seven-part photo series by Barbara Kapusta, which shows 13 people from the artist's immediate surroundings. Standing behind the camera, the artist focuses on the gazes, gestures, postures and facial expressions of the protagonists. Formations, configurations and instances of physical contact give rise to a narrative of possible loves, bonds, friendships and professional collaborations.

The artist works primarily with moving pictures between reality and fiction, representativity, directness and presence. In doing so she mixes up the protagonists' personal stories, endeavoring to make visible the construction, and simultaneously the reality, of fiction. In their conversations, the participants in her filmic and photographic works negotiate the ideals, wishes and conditions of friendship and cooperation, while also repeatedly questioning her idea of collaboration and collective authorship ("One never does things alone," says Nina in Kapusta's last film, *Amazon*, 2012).

They She We also explores the wide field of relationships in which the subject no longer encounters anything objective, where everything is associative and dissolves into the intermediate zone between the mutual and the collective. The protagonists are real people with genuine or possible relationships to one another, be it as friend, sister, ally. They are unusual individuals who cannot be indiscriminately combined into a homogenous group - just as the image of a circle of friends, as a narrative, is always a fiction and a construction. Friendship is complicated: it demands commitment and is difficult to understand. Here gazes, gestures, spaces and colors form a circle, "the circle of this group, this story that we do not completely know," Kapusta remarks. "Here we have seven forms of a gesture, a touch... a set of codes," she continues, whereby "the poses, just like the light and the camera perspective, are extremely intentional. The bodily tension is deliberate, the closeness of the persons depicted is perhaps only imaginary. This is a game with the forms of group portraiture, of togetherness. It also plays with linguistic forms of address. Some of the protagonists address the camera and the beholder directly. They gaze at us, because we have been observing them. But we are not a part of the scene."

The pictures speak to their viewers. Nevertheless, one is torn between closeness and distance - one can dive into the narrative, but soon enough one is again kept at a distance. Friendships are not something static; they must be actively conducted, and there is a continual movement between giving and taking. A group forms a frame of reference for individuals, and likewise a circle of friends enables someone to step forward from the group from time to time, to step into the focus.

The 21er Raum with its mirrored outer surface was designed by Nadim Vardag. At six-week intervals the space features new solo presentations by artists who live and work in Austria as well as the Belvedere artists in residence. The program is curated by Severin Dünser.

Barbara Kapusta lives and works in Vienna. In 2008 she founded the exhibition space Saprophyt with artist and filmmaker Stephan Lugbauer. Together with artist Katharina Aigner she initiates and organizes video and film programs in diverse contexts and spaces. Recently her work has been shown at 21er Haus, Vienna (2013), Kunstpavillon Innsbruck (2012), Galerie Lisa Ruyter, Vienna (2012), Die Diele, Zurich (2012), Freies Museum Berlin (2012), Unit One Gallery, Beijing (2012), Sigmund Freud Museum Vienna (2011).

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- 1 ***And then she's the one among us. (Katharina and Barbara), 2013***
C-Print, 100 × 74.9 cm
- 2 ***We've many places. I remember light and dark ones, secret and public ones. (Rike and Johanna), 2013***
C-Print, 90 × 67.4 cm
- 3 ***... and suddenly someone else also believes in her. Believes that she'll jump farther than we and then pulls up with her. (Teona and Christina), 2013***
C-Print, 80 × 59.9 cm
- 4 ***If you want to look into the future it can only be because we've made it. (Kathrin and Nora), 2013***
C-Print, 80 × 59.9 cm
- 5 ***It's also that each of us can step out of the circle for a solo. (Marlene, Jessyca and Tanja), 2013***
C-Print, 108 × 80.9 cm
- 6 ***Not everyone wants to perform such a solo. You may not even be interested in this label and think: "We can be so many more!" (Christina), 2013***
C-Print, 85 × 67.4 cm
- 7 ***We meet in all of the places. She makes a proposal. And then we meet... (Paran and Miriam), 2013***
C-Print, 101 × 75.6 cm