

Sebastian Riemer *GRLS BBYLON*

8 September – 20 October 2018

Opening: 7 September 2018, 6 pm

For the DC Open 2018 SETAREH GALLERY presents Sebastian Riemer's new exhibition *GRLS BBYLON*. The starting point of the intermedial examination is found fashion pictures. The photographs that the artist, who acts like an image researcher, discovered in Tel Aviv, were not only faded by the constant sunlight, but breaking down.

Looking at the morbidly beautiful pictures, one may be reminded of a scene from Fellini's *Roma* (QR Code), in which an ancient Roman villa decorated with imposing frescoes is accidentally exposed during underground construction. The depicted figures seem to be brought back to life, but the air streaming in destroys the images of yore in front of the horrified eyes of the viewers, as if the depicted were withdrawing into the past from which they were briefly visible only a moment ago. Riemer seems to follow a similar mindset in his work.



He shows fashion photography in decomposition and dissolution, thus in non-fulfilment of its actual claim. The models cannot stay young and perfect forever, so their pictures – as in a variant of the Dorian Gray theme – are exposed to a massive aging process. They are disintegrating, loosening and peeling from the printed layer, leaving only a few darker contoured areas. It is astonishing that the current condition results from climatic circumstances and would not be possible in this form in Central Europe – at least not yet. It seems that these tendencies of dissolution were largely ignored in the invention and further development of photography. As such, one could think that the medium is a Eurocentric project because of its material properties.

Not only the image carrier, but also the image content reflects a certain Eurocentrism in its uniform ideal of beauty of a supposedly international fashion standard. The "European-Caucasian look", as it is often called in the fashion industry, is even present in countries whose population does not correspond to such a "human type". Thus, the decaying images seem like relics of a Western worldview that is in the process of losing face.

The exhibition's 16-language artist's publication takes up the idea of exchangeability and the associated confusion of universally applicable standard images and transfers the aspect of artistic-medial translation to a linguistic-textual level. For this purpose, the frequently translated text by Israeli art historian Michal B. Ron was juxtaposed with the works.

Sebastian Riemer consistently addresses the recurring questions in photography about authorship and availability of images and shows that it can still be relevant today to take photographs, transform them and hang them on the wall as works of art. By taking the model pictures in high resolution and stretching them in large format so that their grid points become visible, Riemer brings the viewer close to the motifs. In this way, he creates an immediacy in which he focuses on topics that can be projected into the motifs such as media reflection, colonial criticism, Western standards and migration, thereby aesthetically negotiating questions of social actuality.

Riemer preserves states of decay of photographic ruins that probably no longer exist. The capturing of the unrestrained, the photographs of decomposing photos underline the desire that has always been associated with the medium to stop time and simultaneously, illustrate the transience of the moment to be banished. Especially in the morbidity of the flaking photographs of models, which throw us a last seductive glance, in these fleeting moments lies the actual beauty of what has barely been depicted, which only at the moment of its disintegration is able to step out of its actually trivial function.