

TOBIAS ZIELONY  
*Maskirovka*

Opening: Thursday, 1st March, 2018 | 6.30 p.m.  
Lia Rumma Gallery | Via Stilicone 19 | MILAN  
Gallery opening hours: Tuesday-Saturday 11 a.m.-1.30 p.m. / 2.30-7 p.m.

Lia Rumma Gallery is pleased to present the fifth solo exhibition of German artist Tobias Zielony, opening on Thursday 1st March, 2018 in the Milan Gallery.

The exhibition presents for the first time in Italy, *Maskirovka*, the project realized by Zielony between 2016 and 2017, in the city of Kiev, and recently exhibited in the solo show *Haus der Jugend* at the Kunsthalle von der Heydt in Wuppertal.

"Maskirovka" literally means "masking" and indicates a military doctrine developed in the Soviet Union since the 1920s, based on measures of camouflage, denial and deception to confuse the enemy. Recently, the term "Maskirovka" has been used to indicate Russian policy towards Ukraine, the military operations in Crimea and the hybrid state of war, never officially declared, which followed the protests of the Maidan in 2013 and is still ongoing.

The *Maskirovka* project, whose central theme is "disguising" in its various forms, includes a photographic series and a video where Zielony investigates the queer and techno underground scene in Kiev, in the context of the current Ukrainian crisis.

In the stop-motion animation, presented on the ground floor of the Gallery, the sight moves continuously between socio-political contexts and scenes of the young people's private lives. The photographs focus instead on the gestures and poses of the teenagers, portrayed alone or in group, in domestic spaces or marginal environments.

The masking theme establishes a parallel between the political situation and the intimate stories revealed by the photographs. It suggests at the same time the camouflage of the Russian special forces - "the green men" - sent to Crimea in 2014, the use of masks by the protesters of the Maidan to hide their identity and protect their faces from tear gas, but it is also a meaningful moment of the party ritual, in a game of simulations and identity exchange.

In those works Zielony portrays the underground scene of techno and LGBTQI movements of the Ukrainian capital. A scene that has developed on the background of the confused and oppressive political situation of the last few years, and which has somehow gathered many of the energies and dreams of the young generations.

On the second floor two recent works complete the exhibition: *Haus der Jugend* and *Alles (Chemnitz)*.

*Haus der Jugend* is a new double projection Zielony produced by re-examining various series he undertook between 1998 and 2005 in German places as diverse as Leipzig, Chemnitz, Halle, Berlin, Neustadt/Orla, Frankfurt/Oder, Köln, Kassel, Essen and his hometown Wuppertal. These images lead the viewer back into a pre-digital past full of gestures from a period when the reunification of Germany was still something new. By revisiting his oeuvre this new work formulates a new understanding of Zielony's own coming of age as an artist, while at the same time it lays bare the economies between a photographer and his archive.

*Alles (Chemnitz)* was conceived while searching his old storage space in Leipzig. Zielony rediscovered about 100 pieces of Super-8 material that he had cut briefly after shooting the film in Chemnitz in order to scan individual frames. The pieces were randomly glued together and the resulting film digitalized. It turned out that its short sequences run backwards and apparently without intentional order or narrative. Showing young people hanging out in the East German city of Chemnitz, formerly known as Karl-Marx-Stadt, the film cube regarded as a predecessor to his later animations and video work in general.

Tobias Zielony (1974, Wuppertal) became internationally known for his long-term projects with adolescents, prostitutes and refugees – outsiders on the fringes of society. He photographs them in their particular social and architectural environments, emphasizing the moment when they do not fit neatly either into our image of them or even into their own self-image. Their presence in the images speaks of two conflicting desires: of seeking identification with the conformist gestures of a globalized youth culture and of expressing one's own individuality.

Zielony studied Photography at the University of Wales in Newport and at the Academy of Fine Arts in Leipzig. In 2010 he produced the *Vele* project in collaboration with Galleria Lia Rumma, dedicated to the homonymous housing complex conceived in the 60s - 70s by architect Franz Di Salvo in the Scampia district, on the northern suburbs of Naples. The project was presented in two major solo exhibitions at the MAXXI in Rome, and at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2012. Other solo exhibitions include: Berlinische Galerie in 2013, Folkwang Museum Essen, MMK Zollamt Frankfurt and Camera Austria Graz in 2011, Kunstverein Hamburg in 2010, C / O Berlin in 2007. In 2015, with the work "The Citizen" was among the artists invited to exhibit in the German Pavilion, curated by Florian Ebner during the 56th Venice Biennale. He won the GASAG prize in 2006 and the Karl-Ströher-Preis in 2011; he took part in the International Studio Program, New York. Among the most recent publications: *Maskirovka*, Mousse Magazine, 2017; *Vele*, Spector Books, Leipzig, 2014; *Jenny Jenny*, Spector Books, Leipzig 2013; *Manitoba*, Spector Books, Leipzig, 2010; *Story / No Story*, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern, 2010; *Trona - Armpit of America*, Spector Books, Leipzig, 2008.