

# KÖNIG LONDON

ANDREAS MÜHE | EINE DEUTSCHE INTERVENTION

1 – 31 MARCH 2018

OPENING: 28 FEBRUARY, 6 – 9 PM

König London is pleased to present Andreas Mühe, *A German Intervention*.

In his first exhibition for Johann König, German photographer Andreas Mühe shows selected works from his series *A. M. Eine Deutschlandreise (2013)*, *Obersalzberg (2012)* and *Pathos als Distanz (2017)*. With its explicit and implicit references to German history and current affairs, Mühe and König literally see this solo show at the Berlin-based gallerist's London branch as a form of conceptual intervention on existing conditions.

In Mühe's eyes, the photograph itself is already an intervention. Created in the public realm through a click of the camera, the result is not a mere document or likeness; the artist sees photography as a manifested act in and of itself. "I take real places and put people in them," explains Mühe, "They can be real people or actors. The relationship that this process creates between the people and the place can always be read in new and surprising ways."

The impact of each image, forced to reproduce itself in accordance with the light, angle and so on, resides in the craft of the photographer. The craft is what makes the intervention possible in the first place.

The small and large-scale pictures take up two exhibition rooms. The show's central focus are the changing motifs of the travelling chancellor Angela Merkel, who admires "her" country from the backseat of her state limousine – the viewers follow her passing the chalk cliffs, along the river Oder and into the Uckermark.

The spectator is looking at German interventions in London.

## Some Thoughts on Andreas Mühe's "*Deutschlandreise*"

By Simon Strauß

A woman sits by the window. The car has stopped, the engine is running. A ray of sunlight falls on her weary face through the spotless, bulletproof pane of glass. She looks outside, sees the chalk cliffs, prison cells and villas owned by industrialists. She sees waving children, Karl Marx statues and harbour cranes. She warms her hands on a thermos mug at the top of the Zugspitze, she adopts a thinker's pose by the Rhine and she carefully raises her hand once to say goodbye in front her home in Templin. Moments before leaving, the driver wants to calculate the route again and sits bent over the GPS. He'll drive off in a minute, but there's enough time for a wandering thought, a short sideways glance.

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There's an invisible barrier between her, the woman in the back of the limousine, and what's out there, the country, the people. Her country. Her people. She keeps the people around her at arm's length and doesn't let them come too near. There's nothing she distrusts more than thoughtless abandon, sentimental declarations. She sometimes used to jump naked into the Haussee lake, but that was a long time ago. Too long for it to count as a memory. Between then and now lie hundreds of Physics lectures and a falling wall. Today she does autogenic training whenever she has a free moment so that she doesn't have to sleep that much at night; so that she can do more work, craft compromises, develop strategies. Now and again she listens to a Mahler symphony at the Berlin concert hall; then the young women at the entrance must quickly clean their shoes and pins. "The chancellor's coming", they whisper to each other in the hall. But then there is only a small, unassuming woman in a beige trouser suit that hastily shuffles by.

Who is this Angela Merkel? A resplendent ruler she is not. She doesn't want to be at the helm, lead with grand gestures or forcefully promote her own agenda. She prefers to be backstage, to weigh up her options in silence, turn things over in her mind and sit out problems in the backseat. When a ray of sunlight does occasionally fall on her face she's surprised. The outside really does still exist, she thinks behind her soundproof window, a country that lives and breathes, that works hard and is successful and yet is more and more afraid of the future. Thriving landscapes, the Nordfriesland Tageblatt newspaper, forgotten prams - all this is Germany, all this is us.

The photographer Andreas Mühe shows our collective "mum" going on an imaginary journey through Germany today. Here we see her without the rod, her official symbol of power - the emblem of balance and calm - in an intimate, highly unofficial moment. As a helpless bystander with reality coming crashing down around her. Changing her position slightly every time, the artist only shows us the back of her head, her brushed, dyed blond hair, her thickset neck with prominent artery - visible when she turns her head - and her hands, folded neatly in her lap, confidently grasping the door handle or excitedly scratching the window frame in an almost childlike fashion.

Who is this woman? Does she seek or create order? Is she power-hungry or powerless? Does she react or reign? Does she let herself drift along, does she seize her chances or is she sleepwalking? Is she a bureaucrat, an economist or a moderator? We don't know, but we're counting on her. She's not allowed to be exhausted. You can't imagine her ill, weak or despairing. Mühe shows Merkel in a quite improbable moment of silent wonder. The chancellor sitting at her window to the world - secretly observed whilst taking in the Lorelei. The fact that the person portrayed here isn't really our collective "mum" but the artist's own mother is beside the point. It's about holding up a mirror. Projecting. Letting in reality.

Simon Strauß is a features editor at the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung newspaper. His first novel "Seven Nights" was published in 2017.