

If One Thing Matters

- a film about Wolfgang Tillmans

Ein Dokumentarfilm von Heiko Kalmbach
D/USA 2008, 72 min.

Berlinale Screening Dates:

14.02.08, 17:15 CinemaxX5
(press screening)

15.02.08, 22:30 CineStar 8

17.02.08, 13:00 CineStar 8



Synopsis

Aufnahme und Ausnahme liegen bei Wolfgang Tillmans eng beieinander: Ein Blumenkasten voller Unkraut wird im Abbild zum Stilleben, ein zerknülltes T-Shirt zur Skulptur. Wolfgang Tillmans zählt zu den bekanntesten und meist gefragten Fotografen der Welt. Mit zufällig wirkenden Bildern von Parties und Club-Life wurde er zu Beginn der neunziger Jahre berühmt. Doch bald galt Tillmans weitaus mehr als ein Chronist der Technogeneration: Im Jahr 2000 erhielt er als erster Fotograf und erster Nicht-Brite den renommierten Turner-Preis.

Heiko Kalmbachs Film greift den Titel von Tillmans erster großen Solo-Show "if one thing matters, everything matters" in der Londoner Tate Gallery (2003) auf und blickt - wie in der Ausstellung selbst - auf das vielschichtige Werk des Künstlers. Über vier Jahre lang hat Kalmbach den Fotografen mit der Videokamera begleitet, um dessen Person und Arbeitsweise auf die Spur zu kommen. Wie nähert Wolfgang Tillmans sich seinem Sujet? Wann wird ein Bild zum Kunstwerk, wie das scheinbar Banale zu etwas Anderem, Höherem? Und welcher Prozess steckt hinter Tillmans eigenwilliger Präsentation seiner Fotografien in Galerien und Museen?

Über bloßes Beobachten mit der Kamera und Impromptu-Interviews entsteht ein filmisches Portrait, das ohne die Stimmen von Experten auskommt. Stattdessen vermittelt es einen lebendigen Eindruck, was den Menschen und Künstler Wolfgang Tillmans antreibt. Weshalb und wie er seine Arbeit macht. Und wie er sich im weltweiten Kunstbetrieb bewegt, ohne dabei die Offenheit für das Besondere im Alltäglichen zu verlieren. "If One Thing Matters" - eine Suche nach dem Kern künstlerischen Schaffens.

Interview

What attracted you to Wolfgang Tillmans' work?

Heiko Kalmbach: Many people say that Tillmans' work is about beauty and redefining what's supposed to be considered beautiful. I never really cared about that side. Tillmans makes images I like to look at, but I don't think about if they are beautiful. To me his work is about being awake and curious and caring and about being engaged in life.



What kind of footage did you take?

Heiko Kalmbach: I approached Tillmans in 1998 and have been filming him once or twice a year from 1999 to 2005, but I ended up only using material from 2000-2003. On top of some planned shoots, I spent a lot of time in a "fly on the wall" mode and tried to cover all the grounds of making and presenting work: studio life, editing of images, preparing of shows, gallery hangings, office necessities etc. I like simple actions. They show a lot about the way we are and about why we act the way we do. With the Tillmans material I'm very fond of the few scenes where he is actually taking pictures. I also got some complete arcs of certain events, like the creation of a video for the Pet Shop Boys in London. Then there are scenes of situations in which Tillmans functions under extreme pressure which of course is interesting to witness. We taped a few sit-down interviews and a couple of interviews just happened during the filming. I also made a point of filming him hanging shows, like in Hamburg or New York, because how he displays his images is so important to his work in itself. Walls become pieces.

Much has been made of the way that he arranges pictures to create a visual field that isn't just about looking at one specific picture. It suggests something filmic.

Heiko Kalmbach: Every image is really strong on its own. But originally the grouping of images was one main point that drew me to his work. I thought it was about something like filmic memory, or about creating a collective memory. A lot of people relate to the way he shows his work in the gallery. Images sometimes reappear in different sizes and forms. There's juxtaposition. Older images are revisited in a different context. And then there are rather formal grids like the Concorde and the Total Solar Eclipse. But ever so often there will be just a single huge print on the wall.



You mentioned you weren't sure if this documentary was possible. What did you mean?

Heiko Kalmbach: The basic documentary concept of 'just looking' is very alluring to me. At the same time I find it questionable. Once you know what you found or want to bring out, you have to give it a form. That's very different from 'just looking'. It's probably the same with making photographs. This film started as an investigation of why we create things that apparently we don't really need. Wolfgang Tillmans was one of a group of people that I wanted to look at who were all from different places and working in different fields. I quickly decided to only focus on Tillmans as the questions of representation and authenticity that I was interested in as a filmmaker were similar in his work as a photographer. So I felt this was a nice parallel to play with. There is this conflict of the documentary filmmaker just being there. You can't just be there like you're invisible. Your presence is inevitable. How do you and your subject deal with this: do you pretend you're not there, do you acknowledge it. It's always a question.

So a documentary about a photographer, a professional looker, seems especially loaded.

Heiko Kalmbach: Loaded, I don't know. But an interesting double-take. In his work Tillmans understands how to create shots that capture an essence he's going for at a specific moment. Filming by nature takes longer than taking a picture, essence is revealed through time passing. I do believe it has been interesting for Tillmans to be looked at in the sense that it got him thinking differently about how he looks at his subjects as a photographer.



Has filming Tillmans changed your view of your work or your place within it?

Heiko Kalmbach: Wolfgang Tillmans is a very successful working artist. In my opinion, he's established in the best way possible. He has managed to stay true to his intentions of making work that interests him while continuously showing work, publishing books and teaching. His approach to making his art seems a very healthy one to me. He works very hard and asks again and again if an image is good. I would like to think that being exposed to his process has made me more diligent and caring in my own work. On a more practical level, making a film with Tillmans reminds me that I have to try and make each shot be just right and have it tell a story in itself. And then again, in relation to each other, they all have to create a bigger picture that has something to say.

(Interview by Debra Travis for Substancezine)

Biografie

Heiko Kalmbach wurde 1969 in Freudenstadt im Schwarzwald geboren.

Studium der Kultur-, Theater- und Filmwissenschaft in Bremen und Berlin. Regiestudium an der New York University, Tisch School of the Arts, Department of Film and TV.

Heiko Kalmbach arbeitet als freier Filmemacher, Theaterregisseur und Videokünstler in Deutschland und den USA. Seit 1994 dreht er Kurzfilme und Videos, die auf Filmfestivals wie Oberhausen, São Paulo und South By Southwest gezeigt wurden. 'IF ONE THING MATTERS – a film about Wolfgang Tillmans' ist sein erster abendfüllender Dokumentarfilm.



Filmografie

- 1997 CHARLES IMPOSSIBLE FORD
Kurzdokumentarfilm
- 2000 NEW YORK IS DISAPPEARING
Kurzfilm
- 2001 LES BIO: EDGAR OLIVER
Kurzdokumentarfilm
- 2002 TURTLE MONKEY
Kurzfilm
- 2004 CONTROLLED
Kurzfilm
- 2006 DER MEXIKANER
Kurzfilm
- 2008 IF ONE THING MATTERS – A FILM ABOUT WOLFGANG TILLMANS
Dokumentarfilm

FESTIVALTEILNAHMEN (Auswahl)

Lower East Side Film Festival, USA (Directors' Prize for Most Original Short)
First Run Film Festival NY (Nestor Almendros Award for Excellence in Cinematography)
Cinevue Festival Florida (Honorable Mention)
South By Southwest Film Festival, Austin, USA
PILOT:1 International Artforum London
Internationale Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen
International Short Film Festival São Paulo, Brazil
Internationales Kurzfilm Festival Hamburg

(Foto von Heiko Kalmbach, ©Todd Weinstein, 2007)

If One Thing Matters - a film about Wolfgang Tillmans

Dokumentarfilm von Heiko Kalmbach

Deutschland/USA 2008, 72 min., Digi Beta, 1:1.85, Farbe

PRODUKTION/BUCH/REGIE/KAMERA/SCHNITT

Heiko Kalmbach

MIT

Wolfgang Tillmans

MUSIK

Frank S. Blumm

ZUSÄTZLICHER SCHNITT

Susan Korda

SCHNITTBERATUNG

Susanne Burg

Frank Domhan

BUCHBERATUNG

Alexander Pfeuffer

SOUND DESIGN

Jana König

FARBKORREKTUR

Marianne Thies

GEFÖRDERT VON

New York Foundation for the Arts

MacDowell Colony, New Hampshire

Sitterwerk St. Gallen

Camargo Foundation, Cassis

KONTAKT

Heiko Kalmbach

WhyMakeThings Productions

Immanuelkirchstr. 19

10405 Berlin, Germany

Tel.: +49 (0)30 442.5244

Mobil.: +49 (0)1577 470.5329

info@heikokalmbach.com