



## **LENA SCHRAMM**

Ecstasy

Opening 29.4.2022

30.4. – 18.6.2022

Galerei Berlin

Quotations from the encyclopedia Ecstasy which is published by Verlag für mordner Kunst, Vienna.

*The fact that Lena Schramm makes the particularities of ecstasy tablets impressively visible with the possibilities of painting allows (...) one to become aware of a method that is being used in various areas of contemporary society.*

## **Wolfgang Ullrich**

Art historian and cultural scientist

*Now, criminal lawyers are known as sober people; loss of control is abhorrent to them. It may therefore surprise no one that intoxication, for others a blissful decoupling from the dullness of everyday life, is for criminal lawyers rather a reason to open a file with a business mark.*

## **Christoph Nebgen**

Lawyer and specialist in criminal law

*Knowledge of the composition of the tablet and thus of the resulting pharmacological properties are going to be lost. This should be counteracted with consistent „drug checking“.*

## **Dr. Thomas Wollheim**

Graduate chemist

*(...) the dream of the „raving society“ that is based on the cuddly effect of ecstasy has seeped away without consequence like the urine of the Love Parade visitors in the Tiergarten.*

## **Adriano Sack**

Journalist

## **Ecstasy as Image Atlas and Material**

By Rosa Windt

Lena Schramm programmatically employs the incidental and marginal things of everyday life. Small and inconspicuous things as well as assemblages of materials from daily life develop dynamic and disturbing statements when reassembled or decontextualised. An installation consisting of a rejected child mannequin without a torso and a pile of crispbread to stabilise it under its foot thus catapults out almost meme-like connotative connections between the materiality and transience of crispbread and traumas of the child's body and childhood - in which crispbread was often considered a popular snack ... In a way that is as playful as it is trenchant, Schramm has devoted the second volume of an ongoing series of lexica - in the medium of the artist's book - to the study of ecstasy. As a small, incidental find, both the colourfulness and especially the symbols imprinted as standard on the drug come into focus. While the lexicon lists and describes a selection of the ecstasy pills produced since 1994 with their symbols in the form of 570 alphabetically arranged entries, such as maple leaf, Apple, Bentley, bomb, Chanel or clown, differently sorted groups of paintings approach the subject by means of various partly fictitious thematic focuses.

For the lexicon entries, Schramm has used internet sources and assembled them into her own entries using the copy-paste method. The artist draws on scorned, often untested, ephemeral and explicitly non-scientific platforms, such as the open encyclopaedia Wikipedia, as found objects and material for text collages, similar

to crispbread. The form and graphic elaboration of Schramm's lexicon feigns matter-of-factness and a familiar impression; this is contrasted by the deliberately amateurish and incomplete superimposition of information and knowledge about the party drug Ecstasy. In this respect, the artist is less concerned with recapitulating intoxication and ecstasy à la T. C. Boyle than with exploring the culture, history and politics of the last thirty years through the signs and symbols on the pills. Ecstasy, thus understood as object and material, becomes a kind of image archive and collective memory that, in borrowing numerous trademarks and pop cultural icons, also reflects an increasing capitalisation of everyday life. As part of a luxury culture, popular logos, symbols and trademarks thus also serve as a kind of illegal seal of approval and additional projection surface.

In different sortings and series of paintings, the artist takes up such aspects as well as the schematic and serial nature of the lexicon again. In a large-scale series of 12 panels, for example, the 570 different pills with their symbols and colourfulness are painterly reproduced in analogy to the entries in the lexicon. At first glance, the impasto application on a black ground gives the impression of being true to detail. On closer inspection, however, no tablet is true to form and, at the latest in the course of the drying process of the oil paint, a cracked and shrivelled surface counteracts any claim to completeness here too. With the so-called „Dosierer-Reihe“ (Doser series), another series of paintings modelled on tablet dosers, thematic connections and sortings of the embossed symbols on ecstasy pills are revealed, for example, on the theme of sex and love (heart, Let's Fuck, Durex etc.) or war (Putin, grenade, target etc.). In addition to abstruse or incoherent combinations of individual tablets, there are also invented assortments or fictitious symbols, such as the disruptive doser (Etherium, Crispr, Web3, etc.) or the art doser (Van Gogh's ear, MoMA, Philip Guston, Jerry Saltz, etc.). Also, the currently still hypothetical Omikron doser with company logos positively advertising a vaccination against Covid-19 refers to a certain potential of tablets and their symbols to counter pure abundance and commerce with subversive as well as ironic commentaries. In the interplay of chance, whimsy, irony and yet always adhering to conceptual rigour, Lena Schramm thus exposes an almost endlessly continuing stream of associations and connotations behind every object, material, symbol or even word. In a Warburgian sense, Ecstasy is thus also read as an atlas of images and an archive whose intoxicating effect, just like the imprinted images, oscillate between fiction and reality and reveal numerous links and overlaps here.