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FRANZ GRAF

**FUN (alternative(begraebnisse
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Opening: 5.3.2013, 7 p.m.

Exhibition duration: 6.3. - 5.4.2013

The artist is present.

The title of Franz Graf's exhibition is enigmatic. It alludes to pleasure, to death, to parting from people we feel close to and posits an unexplained alternative. Joie de vivre, mourning and suffering merge, their entanglement – all of this creating a heterogeneous picture, which shapes the existential value of life.

Franz Graf's paintings deploy their ambivalent spaces of meaning at the moment this paradox unity collapses.

It is mainly portraits of women that Graf has been creating of late. PURGA establishes a link to his most recent exhibition in Vienna (BAWAG 2011). As a result of the present hanging of the works, there is a new, changed way of interpreting them, which makes the painting symbolic and exemplary of the entire show.

Relationships and encounters assume a novel presence in their absence. What is present is a form of memory, which automatically places the image of memory in the context of very different experiences or thoughts. An image that was once captured is covered by many layers of experiences and sensation. Past and visionary aspects often become pictorially manifest in Franz Graf's portraits – sometimes as abstraction or metaphor. It is not possible to give a definitive explanation. The character of painting remains hermetic in its mysterious ambiguity.

The subtle graphite drawing undergoes successive transformations, omissions, condensations and overpaintings with different cadences of aggression, throwing light and shadows, while a deep blackness that make it only partly possible for the gaze to directly capture what is depicted. The explicit proximity of the portraits is instilled with a contrary imaginary but intrinsic distance – as a sphere in which joy and pleasure, desire, nostalgia and existential loss are merged to create an aesthetically coded formation.

The contours of substantial states of being can be vaguely discerned, emerging from a distance we cannot identify like the whisper, murmur emitted by historical radio devices positioned as stations for the reception of decipherable frequencies between the images, highlighting their subversive sensuality. Irritating and fascinating, an allusive, enigmatic complexity fills the gallery spaces.

(Margareta Sandhofer)