

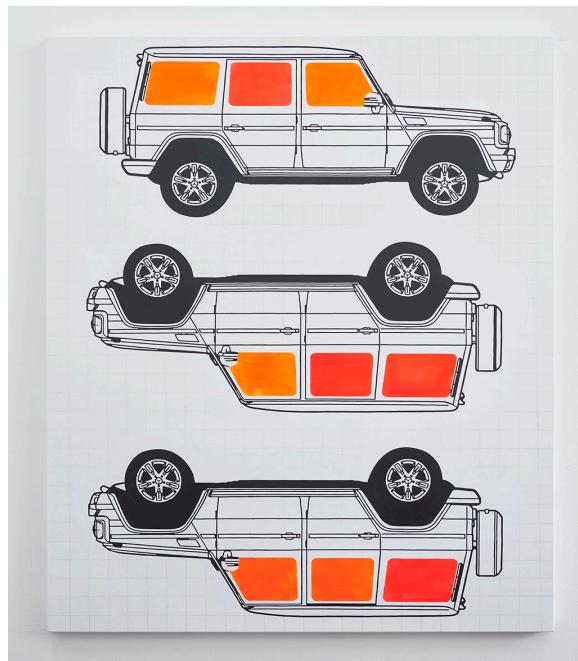
Meliksetian MB Briggs

Johannes Wohnseifer

Class & Class Conflict

April 20 to June 10, 2017

Opening Reception: Thursday, April 20th 6-8pm



Class and Class Conflict

Fifty years ago in 1967, the Shah of Persia visited Germany. There were many students protesting against this official state visit. The protest culminated in the killing of a young student named Benno Ohnesorg by a local policeman. This event led to the political radicalization of many of the protesters and is seen historically as the birth of German terrorism, which led to the German Autumn in 1977, when the third generation of Red Army Faction terrorists challenged the state with several killings, the kidnapping of an industry leader and, simultaneously, a hijacking of a Lufthansa airliner by terrorist allies from Palestine.

The Shah of Persia invested in an army equipped with modern weapons. As a shareholder of the company, he asked Mercedes-Benz to develop an all-terrain vehicle for his army and police forces. By the time the Mercedes G-Class went into production in 1979, the regime of the Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, was overthrown by the Iranian revolution and Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the revolution, came into power.

In 1957 Ralf Dahrendorf, a German-British sociologist and political scientist worked on his post-doctoral

thesis entitled *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Societies*. The eponymous book was published in 1959. It explained and analyzed class division and social inequality in modern societies. That's where I borrowed the title for this show.

For a long time, I believed that artists are kind of "class-less" or living and working in between classes. That is still true in some aspects but also subject to change. Probably they've formed a class of their own for a while.

I always tried to reflect the immanent contradictions one is facing when working as an artist. Although I'm generally interested in political questions and use them sometimes for my work, I would always refuse to declare my work as political or myself as a political artist. On the contrary, working as an artist today has the side effect of stabilizing the system.

The Mercedes G-Class is an interesting car because it is being built almost in the same shape and configuration for almost 40 years now. This is a very long production cycle for a car and the demand for the car is still high. During this period, the car morphed from a working tool to a worldwide status symbol. It's an expensive car, which holds its value in an extraordinary way. It exemplifies the rich-get-richer-dynamics in a precise way. Furthermore, the word "class" is part of the car's name.

So I liked the idea to use it for paintings, which could be simplistic sociological models. These works are grouped with paintings from other series, entitled *Colony Collapse Disorder*, *Search Engines* and *Password-Paintings*.

~ Johannes Wohnseifer, 2017

Meliksetian | Briggs is pleased to present *Class & Class Conflict*, the first solo exhibition at the gallery by Johannes Wohnseifer. Wohnseifer's multi-referential works reflect the history of art and design, the legacy of Pop and Minimalism, corporate branding and the fetishization of desire, politics and history.

Johannes Wohnseifer (b.1967) lives and works in Cologne and Erftstadt, Germany. Recent solo exhibitions include Parkhaus im Malkastenpark, Düsseldorf, Johann König Galerie, Berlin, Philara, Düsseldorf, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne, ReMap3, Athens, Greece, Simultanhalle, Cologne and Casey Kaplan, New York. Group shows over the past few years include exhibitions at MARTa Herford, Herford, Germany, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Sammlung Olbricht / me Collectors Room Berlin, Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Nürnberg, Museum Folkwang, Essen, Kunsthaus Bregenz, Bregenz, Austria among others. Wohnseifer has made numerous artist's books throughout his career, including his latest, *Canon*, published by Buchhandlung Walther König, Cologne