

Eifersucht

A project organised by Parliament, Galerie Noah Klink and Margareta von Oswald

“Isn’t jealousy a subject once classically used and discussed in art, and now frowned upon?” A friend asked when I started to talk about the project we envisioned between Galerie Noah Klink and Parliament. She referred to a celebrated series of paintings on jealousy by Edvard Munch, in which jealousy is depicted in classic romantic terms by being triangular - the two lovers and the jealous third part. The emotions are depicted in the complimentary colors green, associated with jealousy and envy, and red, associated with love and desire. She continued: “Munch, living within a bohemian circle of artists dedicated to free love and sexuality, saw the bright and dark sides of love and desire. Inseparably, one does not exist without the other. Now, I guess, we are expected to be able to love without jealousy and insecurity somehow.”

This is a show which is dedicated to the feeling of jealousy. Jealousy is the desire to have, own, or represent what another has, owns, or represents, a desire never fulfilled. This desire can articulate in feelings of anxiety, insecurity, unhappiness, or anger, because someone has something or someone that you want. To be ruled by the envy of another equals a lack of generosity and kindness and reveals an insufficiency in self-love. This uneasy state of mind is at once omnipresent and so difficult to admit, and therefore something we find worth exploring.

We chose the German term *Eifersucht* as the exhibition’s title because it etymologically reflects an economic dimension of jealousy which we also wanted to include. *Eifersucht*, literally, is composed of the terms ‘zeal’ (*Eifer*) and ‘addiction’ (*Sucht*). Addiction highlights jealousy’s characteristic as being a by definition unattained, but passionate desire. Zeal, then, widens the scope from jealousy’s limited usage in romantic terms towards the desire to achieve. Zealous, mirroring its etymological origins in jealous, carries a connotation of excessive feeling, being uncompromisingly enthusiastic. Being excessively enthusiastic, we feel, reflects contemporary working conditions, and not only in the art world, in which we self-exploit to self-optimize to self-sell. In view of the sometimes imagined, but always stronger other, we aspire to be better, smarter, faster.

Traditional objects of protection against the evil eye were a crucial point of departure for the selection of material for us. The evil eye signifies that looking at someone or something is a consequential act in itself. Without the object of protection, looking or observing might harm the object of contemplation, regardless of the observer’s intention. By casting a gaze, stare or look that is envious and ill-wishing, the jealous person inflicts harm upon the envied one. Taking this idea of the gaze as an action seriously, what are the consequences in our contemporary worlds, in which the intimate and the public are more and more interwoven? The mechanics of desire and thus, of jealousy, have become an increasingly important dimension of the economy and capital production. Instagram scrolling, social media exhibitionism and network voyeurism are dominated by indulging in FOMO and jealousy. We seem to live and die through our eyes.

Margareta von Oswald