

**AFTER PARTY: HOW MILEN TILL FOUND HIS TRUE RHYTHM IN ART
BY ANN-KATHRIN RIEDL
ARTWORK COURTESY OF MILEN TILL & GALERIE CRONE**

BEFORE MILEN TILL BECAME KNOWN FOR TRANSFORMING EVERYDAY OBJECTS INTO POETIC, OFTEN HUMOROUS REFLECTIONS ON CULTURE AND MEMORY, HE WAS HALF OF THE TILLS — A MUNICH DJ DUO WHOSE NIGHTS BECAME LOCAL LEGEND. FOR YEARS, HE MOVED THROUGH THE CITY'S AFTER-HOURS PULSE, SURROUNDED BY NOISE, PEOPLE, AND A SENSE OF ENDLESS MOTION. BUT LONG BEFORE THE CLUBS, THERE WAS ART. AT SIXTEEN, TILL FOUND HIMSELF IN A MARCEL DUCHAMP EXHIBITION IN BASEL. THAT DAY, THE NOTION THAT *ANYTHING* COULD BE SCULPTURE TOOK ROOT. YEARS LATER, THIS IDEA STILL ANCHORS HIS PRACTICE.

TODAY, TILL WORKS IN HIS MUNICH STUDIO, REIMAGINING SKATEBOARDS, TURNTABLES, AND OTHER ARTIFACTS OF SUBCULTURE AS POETIC READY-MADES THAT TURN FRAGMENTS OF HIS PAST INTO A LANGUAGE OF THEIR OWN. WHAT REMAINS OF TILL'S NIGHTLIFE ERA NOW LIVES IN HIS ART: ITS ENERGY, ITS MELANCHOLY, ITS HUMOR.

ANN-KATHRIN RIEDL: YOU ACTUALLY STARTED YOUR CAREER IN NIGHTLIFE — AS A DJ AND RESTAURANT OWNER. WHAT ASPECTS OF THAT TIME STILL ECHO IN YOUR ART TODAY?

MILEN TILL: IN CERTAIN SERIES, ESPECIALLY IN MY EARLIER WORKS, OBJECTS CONNECTED TO NIGHTLIFE OR GASTRONOMY OFTEN APPEAR — TURNTABLES, VINYL RECORDS, LONG DRINK AND SHOT GLASSES, AND LATELY EVEN BEER COASTERS IN MY “PILOTIS D'AMBACH” SCULPTURES.

AR: ARTICLES OFTEN MENTION THAT YOU HAD TO DRAW A RADICAL LINE UNDER THAT CHAPTER TO AVOID LOSING YOURSELF IN IT. WHAT PART OF YOU WAS AT PLAY BACK THEN — AND HAVE YOU MADE PEACE WITH IT?

MT: I'M SOMEONE WHO TENDS TOWARD EXCESS. AT SOME POINT, NIGHTLIFE JUST WASN'T HEALTHY FOR ME ANYMORE. IT WAS SIMPLE AND COMPLICATED AT ONCE: I HAD TO QUIT EVERYTHING. LUCKILY, I MANAGED TO DO THAT. YOU NEVER REALLY MAKE PEACE WITH IT, BUT YOU LEARN TO LIVE WITH IT.

AR: IN AN OLDER INTERVIEW WITH *INTERSECTION*, YOU ONCE SAID, “WHAT COULD I HAVE TOLD AS A YOUNG ARTIST IF I HADN'T LIVED ANYTHING YET?” WHAT EXACTLY DID YOU NEED TO EXPERIENCE IN ORDER TO BECOME THE ARTIST YOU ARE TODAY?

MT: I KNEW EARLY ON THAT TO DEVELOP AN INTERESTING POSITION, YOU NEED MATERIAL — LIFE EXPERIENCE, STORIES, FABRIC TO WORK WITH. AND FINDING THAT

MATERIAL TAKES TIME. I WAS CONSTANTLY SEARCHING AND EXPERIENCING, COLLECTING ALONG THE WAY. LISTING IT ALL WOULD FILL A BOOK.

AR: WHICH THEMES IN YOUR WORK ARE DEEPLY INTERTWINED WITH YOUR OWN LIFE AND EXPERIENCES?

MT: I'VE ALWAYS HAD A STRONG LOVE FOR ART HISTORY. ENCOUNTERS WITH ARTISTS WHO LATER BECAME ROLE MODELS HAVE SHAPED ME A LOT. AT SOME POINT, I LEARNED TO TRANSLATE PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS INTO WORKS BY PUTTING THEM INTO THE CONTEXT OF ART HISTORY. THOSE TWO COMPONENTS — THE BIOGRAPHICAL AND THE ART-HISTORICAL — ARE WHAT CARRY ME THROUGH MY PRACTICE.

AR: AND IF YOU HAD TO NAME THREE FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS THAT RUN THROUGH YOUR WORK AND DEFINE YOUR ARTISTIC INTENTION, WHAT WOULD THEY BE?

MT: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE.



Selbstbeklebung V, 2025

Selbstbeklebung VI, 2025

AR: YOUR WORKS OFTEN PLAY WITH CULTURAL SYMBOLS AND EVERYDAY OBJECTS. WHERE DOES THE IDEA BEGIN — WITH THE OBJECT OR THE CONCEPT BEHIND IT?

I KNEW EARLY ON THAT TO DEVELOP AN INTERESTING POSITION, YOU NEED MATERIAL — LIFE EXPERIENCE, STORIES, FABRIC TO WORK WITH. AND FINDING THAT MATERIAL TAKES TIME.

MT: I'D DESCRIBE MYSELF MORE AS AN OBJECT ARTIST THAN A CONCEPTUAL ONE. I CAN USUALLY TELL

VERY QUICKLY IF AN OBJECT HAS POTENTIAL. OFTEN IT'S JUST A BUILDING BLOCK FOR SOMETHING BIGGER. SO YES, THE IDEA USUALLY BEGINS WITH THE OBJECT — AND THROUGH CONTEXT AND USE, IT BECOMES PART OF A LARGER CONCEPT.

AR: HOW IMPORTANT IS A PERSONAL CONNECTION WHEN DECIDING WHICH OBJECT TO TRANSFORM?

MT: MOST OF THE TIME, THESE ARE OBJECTS I'VE SUBCONSCIOUSLY SCANNED AND STORED AWAY OVER THE YEARS — THINGS THAT RESURFACE WHEN THEY FIT A NEW IDEA. SO THE PERSONAL, EVEN INTIMATE, CONNECTION PLAYS A BIG ROLE. THESE ARE OFTEN OBJECTS I'VE ENCOUNTERED BEFORE, AND THEY CARRY A CERTAIN MELANCHOLY FOR ME.

AR: MANY OF YOUR WORKS HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR — A WINK OF THE EYE. WHAT ROLE DOES IRONY PLAY IN YOUR ARTISTIC OUTLOOK?

MT: HUMOR IS THE BEST ANTIDOTE TO MELANCHOLY. WITHOUT IT, LIFE WOULD BE HARD TO BEAR — AND THE SAME GOES FOR ART.



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Pilotis d'Ambach III, 2024 Pilotis d'Ambach IV, 2024

AR: YOUR UPCOMING SHOW *VIENNESE ACTIVISM* CONNECTS ART AND PROTEST - A LONG-STANDING RELATIONSHIP. HOW DO YOU SEE THAT CONNECTION TODAY?
MT: POLITICAL ART HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT.

AR: IN YOUR EYES, HOW DO THE APPROACHES OF THE 1960S VIENNESE ACTIONISTS DIFFER FROM THOSE OF TODAY'S CLIMATE ACTIVISTS - AND WHERE DO THEY OVERLAP?

MT: THE ACTIONISTS BEGAN AS A SMALL GROUP OF ART STUDENTS IN POSTWAR AUSTRIA, INFLUENCED BY ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM, PUSHING BOUNDARIES TO PROVOKE AND QUESTION AUTHORITY. THEY OPERATED WITHIN THE ART CONTEXT. CLIMATE ACTIVISTS, BY CONTRAST, FORM A LARGE, GLOBAL SOCIAL MOVEMENT THAT ACTS POLITICALLY. WHAT UNITES THEM IS THE WILLINGNESS TO GO TO THE LIMITS OF WHAT'S BEARABLE - TO SHOCK, TO INFLICT PAIN ON THEMSELVES, TO DESTROY OR SUGGEST DESTRUCTION, TO FACE IMPRISONMENT. ABOVE ALL, BOTH CREATE IMAGES MEANT TO PROVOKE CHANGE. THAT VISUAL PARALLEL IS THE FOCUS OF MY EXHIBITION OPENING NOVEMBER 20, 2025, AT GALERIE CRONE VIENNA.

AR: HOW MUCH DOES ACTIVISM NEED ARTISTIC SENSITIVITY - AND HOW MUCH SHOULD ART FEEL SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE?

MT: ACTIVISM NEEDS A VISUAL LANGUAGE TO CREATE IMAGES THAT STICK IN PEOPLE'S MINDS. ART, IN TURN, SHOULD CARRY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY BY NOT LETTING ITSELF BE INSTRUMENTALIZED.

AR: WHAT HAPPENS TO ART WHEN IT BECOMES INCREASINGLY ENTANGLED WITH ACTIVISM?

MT: IT EVOLVES. WHETHER THAT'S FOR BETTER OR WORSE - THAT'S UP FOR DEBATE.

AR: HOW CAN AN ARTIST AVOID SLIPPING FROM CONVICTION INTO MORAL PREACHING?

MT: ANY ATTEMPT TO ANSWER THAT WOULD ALREADY SOUND LIKE MORAL PREACHING.

AR: THE OVERARCHING THEME OF THIS ISSUE IS VISIONARY. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING AN ARTISTIC VISION?

MT: IF I KNEW, I WOULDN'T TELL YOU. I DON'T THINK THERE'S A RECIPE FOR VISIONS.

AR: BUT TO WHAT EXTENT IS IT ALSO A PROCESS OF SELF-DISCOVERY?

MT: YOU ENCOUNTER YOURSELF ALONG THE WAY - YOU DON'T HAVE TO SEARCH FOR IT.

AR: WHAT MAKES A VISION AUTHENTIC, IN YOUR EYES?

MT: THE EXECUTION.

AR: WHICH ASPECTS OF TODAY'S ART WORLD MAKE IT EASIER OR HARDER TO EMBARK ON THAT PATH?

MT: THE ART MARKET HAS SLOWED DOWN, FUNDING HAS BEEN CUT, AND OPTIMISM

IS SCARCE. BUT PRECISELY OUT OF CRISES LIKE THESE COME THE BEST IDEAS. NECESSITY BREEDS INVENTION.

AR: HOW DID YOU FIND THE CONFIDENCE TO REVEAL YOURSELF AS AN ARTIST AND MAKE YOUR VISION VISIBLE TO OTHERS?

MT: MY PROFESSOR, GREGOR HILDEBRANDT, PLAYED A BIG PART IN THAT. HE SAW POTENTIAL IN MY WORK AND ENCOURAGED ME TO STUDY IN HIS CLASS AT THE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS. THAT OPENED DOORS TO GALLERIES AND CURATORS, AND MY CONFIDENCE GREW WITH EVERY EXHIBITION AND ALL THE WORK THAT CAME WITH IT.

AR: HOW VULNERABLE DOES THAT MAKE YOU?

MT: VERY. ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU NO LONGER USE SUBSTANCES TO NUMB IT.

AR: AND HOW FREEING IS IT?

MT: YOU CONFRONT YOUR FEARS - AND REALIZE THEY'RE MANAGEABLE.

AR: SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING, CREATIVITY IS OFTEN DESCRIBED AS THE VOICE OF LOVE - A DIVINE ONE, EVEN. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT IDEA?

MT: LOVE SHOWS UP WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT IT. SO DOES CREATIVITY. YOU CAN'T FORCE EITHER OF THEM. MAYBE THEY SHARE THE SAME SOURCE - AND FOLLOW THE SAME MYSTERIOUS PATH TO REACH US.

ACTIVISM NEEDS A VISUAL LANGUAGE TO CREATE IMAGES THAT STICK IN PEOPLE'S MINDS. ART, IN TURN, SHOULD CARRY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY BY NOT LETTING ITSELF BE INSTRUMENTALIZED.



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