

Rainer Ganahl

9 May - 8 July 2012

tresor
im  Bank Austria Kunstforum

Rainer Ganahl I wanna be Alfred Jarry

in the tresor of the Bank Austria Kunstforum, 9 May 2012 – 15 July 2012



The bicycle takes centre stage in Rainer Ganahl's exhibition *I wanna be Alfred Jarry*. Utopian instrument of perception, body prosthesis and object of desire – in the late nineteenth century the bicycle revolutionised the mobility of the masses; for the bicycle-crazy avant-garde it embodied the mechanised modern age.

Rainer Ganahl, born in 1961 in Bludenz and now living in New York, draws on long years of artistic preoccupation with the bicycle to create a kaleidoscopic cabinet especially for the tresor of the Bank Austria Kunstforum, a bicycle show rich in associations and political references, both historical and topical. He has taken Alfred Jarry (1873 –1907) as the core identification figure – bicycle enthusiast, proto-Dadaist and inventor of pataphysics, the science of imaginary solutions. Jarry died at the age of thirty-four as a result of an eccentric lifestyle aggravated by drug use. Based on painstaking research and integrating a multitude of artistic means, Ganahl gains access to the figure of Jarry by interweaving anachronistic and historical facts, anecdotes and poetic projections – and in doing so continues Jarry's legacy. For instance, Ganahl picks up the idea of the "Perpetual Motion Food"; this was a doping substance for cyclists invented in Jarry's book *Le Surmâle* (The Superman) published in 1902; the drug was used on a five-seater in a cycle race against a train between Vladivostok and Paris. The super-potency of the Superman is likewise a theme in the book and culminates in an act of love that lasts twenty-four hours without interruption – Ganahl associates this with the present-day "equivalent" of Viagra. He transposes Jarry's grotesque narrative version of the Passion of Christ as a cycle race up a mountain into the mountainous region of Tyrol.



On an Austrian "Waffenrad", a historic bicycle manufactured with the technical know-how of the armaments industry, and with a cow bell dedicated to Jarry he scales the summit and recites the original text. By means of a wide range of historic bicycle objects, Ganahl catapults himself backwards so to speak into the era of Alfred Jarry – works that correspond to the idea of the ready-made object and in particular recall the *Bicycle Wheel* (1913) as

Marcel Duchamp's first readymade. Other works revolve around the bicycle wheel as a projection screen for erotic machine-dreams and span an arc to Duchamp's last work *Étant donnés* (1946–1966).

The exhibition crosses the finishing line with *I wanna be Chinese, Dinghi / e-bicycles from China*. Here, in times of an increasing awareness for ecological sustainability, Ganahl heads into the fray with the electric bicycle – made in China – as an alternative to the automobile, meanwhile demonstrating the rising significance of China as a world economic power in the "green" industries. Rainer Ganahl's *Bicycle Manifesto* (2011), which campaigns for the conversion of fifty per cent of all roads into cycle paths, is to be understood "as part of a world view aiming to re-revolutionise mobility, lead urban planning to new ways, and de-mechanise ourselves" (Rainer Ganahl).

Curator: Heike Eipeldauer



The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue (German / English), featuring essays by Heike Eipeldauer and Martha Schwendener. It will be published by Verlag für moderne Kunst Nürnberg.

The Revolution is coming ...

Bicycle Manifesto **50 % Of All Streets To Be Converted Into Bikeways.**



Modern cities were made for cars. Older cities are used as if made for cars with the exception of small pedestrian zones turned into shopping malls. Neither of them accommodates bicycles.

In recent years, in certain cities we have seen the introduction of bicycle lanes. This is a good start but by far not sufficient.

What this Bicycle Manifesto demands can be summed up in one sentence: 50 % of all streets of any city should be reserved for bicycles and electric bicycles. These special lanes should be called bikeways.

Only high speed highways as well as pedestrian zones should be exempt from this rule. Motorcycles or scooters that don't run on batteries or exceed the speed of 32 km (20 miles) an hour should not drive on bikeways. Nor should there be pedestrians allowed.

With this rule, we don't have to ask or beg for more courtesy and respect towards cyclists, and pedestrians don't have to fear bicyclists when they step onto their bike lanes so often stolen from pedestrian territory. Bike lanes don't belong on sidewalks and they shouldn't ornate streets. Bikeways should be like separate street lanes that are clearly separated from car lanes and pedestrian walk ways.

Traffic engineering theory has to acknowledge that cyclists (including e-cyclists) are a growing class of species that cannot be viewed as lawless fast pedestrians or powerless car drivers.

What is to be gained and what is to be lost with such a 50 % solution ?

The introduction of pedestrian zones in the 1960s and 1970s in northern Europe was not an easy imposition. People were too much accustomed to drive up everywhere anytime a day. But the reality behind pedestrian zones is that these traffic less city areas became open air shopping malls hence the economic gain justified for the inconvenience for traffic.

This shopping mall logic explains why there aren't any significant pedestrian areas in major American cities: In the same era pedestrian zones sprang up in nearly every

German, Swiss and Austrian city, the American dream lead middle class people on newly built highways into suburbs and right next to shopping malls without giving much attention to inner cities that started to decay.

Given this precedent, what would there be gained if existing streets would have to be divided and shared equally with cyclists? For sure, there wouldn't be any more shopping. There might be even less consumption since cyclists can't fill up trunks and backseats. But the gain would be a massive improvement of the quality of life with 50 % less air pollution, healthier, slimmer and hopefully happier people who suffer less from strokes, heart attacks and obesity than car drivers.

If cycling is made safer and more efficient, more people would ride on their bikes. More cyclist on save bikeways will inspire more people to ride and the perception of the city changes: people would discover that their cities can easily be cross by bike. In this game electrical bikes – e-bikes – are not an alternative to bicycles but an alternative to cars. The car traffic would for sure be diminished and the pattern of transportation will change. Even consumption and cooking habits might change as smaller open air markets with fresh and locally produced products can have a re-





healthier and environmentally friendly transportation. Once the infrastructure is in place, a massive re-thinking will take place and people of all ages and in all physical shape will resort to bicycles or e-bicycles.

Rainer Ganahl, New York, January 2011

naissance and invite people to cook differently. In most cities cyclists move as fast or even faster as cars do today.

If bikeways become a reality travel time will be reduced for even cars since many people will opt for bicycling or e-cycling. The use of e-bikes offers pure biking and/or electric assisted biking which guarantees effortless mobility that can compete with the comfort of heated cars.

Generous bikeways will be not only the alternative to the current mostly dangerous bike reality but will be an invitation for more cyclists to hit the road and more cars to give up on driving.

This all will lead to an improvement in the quality of life, to environmental gains, to finally further changes in urban politics and urban transportation which need to be implemented. We need better bike parking facilities, effective bike sharing programs, i. e. cheap rent a bike networks throughout the city.

Bicycle and tricycle traffic combined with e-bike technology can be made so effective that even regular and bulky goods, products and services - taxis, kiosks, etc. - can be offered by bicycle as it is still the case in China and in places where developing and developed economies meet. Bicycles are not only very economic and nonpolluting modes of urban transportation but also very quiet.

Given the implementation of bikeways that share all available streets equally with cars, easy riding on bicycles will guarantee easy living thanks to cheap, much