

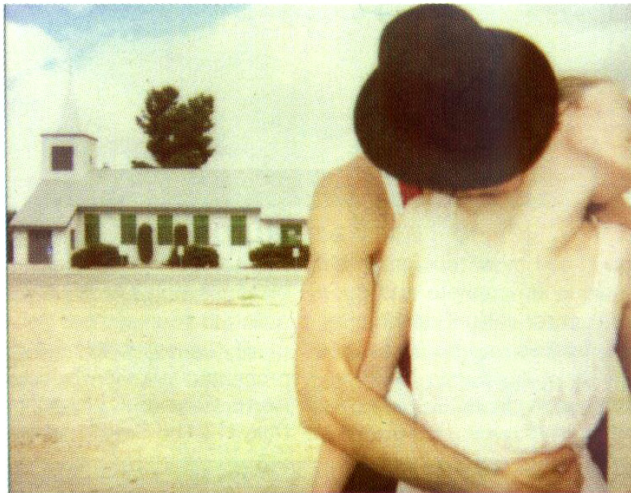
A Star is Born

The buzz that photographer Stefanie Schneider is enjoying right now will soon reverberate beyond the circle of interested parties: collectors, critics, gallery owners, friends and rivals. Soon, prices for her works will skyrocket and her name will be on the tongues of art-lovers in the know. Whoever is interested in photography must take notice: Schneider is a star to be.

The Cuxhaven-born (Lower Saxony) 36-year-old was brought up on Super-8 films shot by her mother - she says she was born with a camera. Two decades and a MFA from the Folkwang Schule in Essen later, Schneider held her first solo exhibition in LA. Today, after numerous solo and group shows in the US, France, and Germany, she lives and works in between Berlin and LA. The two cities don't have the same status in her lifework. While Berlin-Friedrichshain - where she got "sort of stuck" - has accommodated her post-production headquarters for the last three years, LA is her true love. As chance and a filmmaker boyfriend took her there seven years ago, she recalls: "As soon as I got off the plane I loved it. For the first time I could breathe and I felt free. LA is my city."

And what better place than the heart of the movie industry is there to feed the intensity of her dreamlike world. Schneider photographs with a sense of urgency, with a frenzy which fits to the Hollywood dream-factory. The care she puts into the staging of her photos, as well as the strong narratives implied in her work - often conceived in series - result in the construction of a fictionalised reality reminiscent of films. Her pictures unfold as if they were sequences taken from a photonovella world, escaping the single moments associated with photography.

"If I place my bet on the present", Pascal wrote, "I stand to gain nothing - no more than what amounts to a fleeting instant." Schneider bets on that present, on that fleeting instant. The driving force behind her work seems to be this dream state, which leads her to try to make sense of the world's illusions through pictures, often of herself and her friends. Using long-expired Polaroid film, which gives her photos (stained with chemicals) a prematurely aged, unreal look, she transforms landscapes, still-lives and the non-events of daily life - sleeping, driving a car, being bored - into poet-



ic observations. The images from **LAST PICTURE SHOW** come across as miniatures of reality, while shifting our visual and aesthetic experiences. They require a few moments to let their meaning set in. An image of a cemetery could easily be mistaken, at first sight, with an image of clouds drifting through the sky on a beautiful breezy summer day.

With **HITCHHIKER**, a three-minute video, Schneider takes a step further towards film narration. The work contemplates the burning attraction between two women, the pleasures and unreal easiness of the impromptu encounter, and seems to suggest no possible life beyond it. The soundtrack (a compilation of mostly her friends' music) envelops the audience and heightens the feeling of voluptuous tension and fragility.

In Schneider's work, real life and the artist's fantasy-world often interplay, in a fashion reminiscent of Sophie Calle's playful (and manipulative) use of her own life and privacy to create a life/fiction that sparks her art. The series **SIDEWINDER**, for example, was triggered by a failed love affair. As an antidote, the artist fictionalizes, i.e. takes off to the desert with a perfect stranger she met over the Internet: jd rudometkin. The result? An album of tender and voyeuristic intimate moments of the two, offered up for us to share. But what appears as sequences of seemingly unguarded private moments, are, in reality, carefully constructed scenes - scripted by Jd himself. Schneider is one of those artists for whom art is a means of survival, creation a hypnotic antidote to the spleen of life. The woman's very personality - subdued at first, then, restless, whimsical and recklessly imaginative - makes you wonder what she would have become without the vital outlet of her photography.

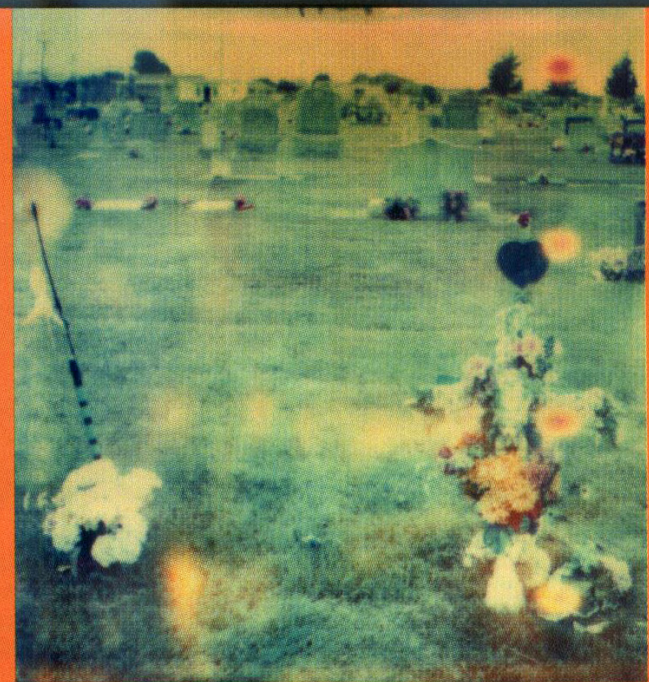
CAPRICE HORN GALERIE Rykestr. 2, Prenzlauer Berg, Tel 4404 8929, U-Bhf Senefelder Platz, Wed-Fri 13-17, Sat 11-19. Through Nov 18



Hitchhiker, 2005, 3 minute



Motel window, 2005



Cemetery, 2005