

Jürgen Baldiga

Hover

09.10.2021 - 27.11.2021

1959 born a strong eight-pounder

A miner's son

Moved to Berlin in 1979 – jobs as chef/barkeeper/lover/prostitute/occasional worker

Since 1980 first steps towards the beaux-arts poetry/music/film/performance

1984 sensual acquisition of an immune deficiency

Since 1985 self-taught photographic artist

Since 1989 full (clinical) picture, or rather: never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.¹

Hover is an exhibition of ten pairs of silver gelatin photographs by German artist, musician, poet, performer and activist Jürgen Baldiga. The images on display printed by the artist are pulled from his short but incredibly prolific eight year photographic career, starting in 1985, a year after his diagnosis of 'an immune deficiency' (HIV), and before his untimely death at the age of 34 in 1993 when he decided to end his own life because his recovery from AIDS was hopeless. Ranging from snapshots to staged portraits, the views are quotidian in that they document and preserve people and moments from his daily life and social scene: friends, lovers, strangers passing on the street, Berlin's drag and music communities; depicting moments of intimacy, desire and tenderness, hospital stays, holidays; states of joy, longing, loss, and pain, all set against the social-political backdrop of German reunification.

This exhibition offers a mere glimpse into a rich archive of thousands more of his images, most of which are stored in the archive at The Schwules Museum, Berlin. These diptychs were originally compiled and paired by Baldiga for an artist's book which served as a way to reflect and draw correlations. They stood out as a more direct line of communication with the artist in that there was a logic of relations set out through the action of pairing that gave insight into the way he saw and thought beyond the singular isolated picture.

Much has been written about photography's relation to mortality from Barthes *studium* and *punctum* to Sontag's discussion of the *memento mori*. There is a presupposition that Baldiga's choice to begin photographing after receiving a fatal diagnosis was an attempt to grasp and make permanent something fleeting, a way of extending an otherwise inevitable process of disintegration.

Very special thanks to Aron Neubert and The Schwules Museum, Berlin.

¹ Bio written by the artist in 1992

Clockwise from entrance:

(All works are on loan from SMU Berlin courtesy of Aron Neubert)

Jürgen Baldiga

Juergen (as Amor) / Man with Prosthesis

1991 / 1991

Gelatin silver print

8 x 12 cm (52 x 42 cm framed)

Jürgen Baldiga

Self portrait / Coffins

1991 / 1989

Gelatin silver print

8 x 12 cm (52 x 42 cm framed)

Jürgen Baldiga

Eros (Sperm) / Youth (during Sex)

1986-87 / circa 1986

Gelatin silver print

8 x 12 cm (52 x 42 cm framed)

Jürgen Baldiga

Wife of Dr. Gedaechnisk. / Mrs. Schmidt

Circa 1985 / 1987

Gelatin silver print

8 x 12 cm (52 x 42 cm framed)

Jürgen Baldiga

Michael (in Corin) / BeV Stroganoff

1992 / 1992

Gelatin silver print

8 x 12 cm (52 x 42 cm framed)

Jürgen Baldiga

Military Parade / Self Portrait (as cook)

Circa 1986 / 1988

Gelatin silver print

8 x 12 cm (52 x 42 cm framed)

Jürgen Baldiga

Ikarus / Michael (in Corin)

1992 / 1992

Gelatin silver print

8 x 12 cm (52 x 42 cm framed)

Jürgen Baldiga

Eros / Testicles

1985-86 / 1985-86

Gelatin silver print

8 x 12 cm (52 x 42 cm framed)

Jürgen Baldiga

Condom / Amor with hand Grenade

1990 / 1990

Gelatin silver print

8 x 12 cm (52 x 42 cm framed)

Jürgen Baldiga

Burning Brain / Self Portrait (welded eye)

Circa 1991 / 1990

Gelatin silver print

8 x 12 cm (52 x 42 cm framed)