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INTERVIEW WITH STEFANIE SCHNEIDER

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It's a dreamlike world that [Stefanie Schneider](#) is handing over to us. Visual beauty paired with a deep intensity about life. I first stumbled over her by a recommendation of a friend of mine – and within some moments I was completely absorbed in her expressive work and stories of her life.

Just like *her work* is dealing a lot with the aspects of coincidences and appearances, her own life has been full of them and together with her vision of creating perfection, have taken her a long way. Her initial plan when heading off to L.A right after her studies, was to work in film editing – when a coincidence lead her to a shop selling really cheap out-of-date polaroid films. Without even having the camera for it, Stefanie bought all of them – got the camera the next day and went down to the beach with her sister to take some images. So by chance a great artist came into being. Nowadays *Stefanie Schneiders work* is still characterized by out-of-date polaroids and she has done a great number of exhibitions and amongst other things has been asked by Cyndi Lauper and the Red Hot Chilli Peppers to shoot their covers. Since 2005 she has been working on the [29 Palms, CA project](#), which is an artistic, conceptual, visual, filmic collaboration between artists from different artistic backgrounds. "A long term improvisation" as they call it. In 2009 she released her first movie out of the 29 Palms, CA project, "Till Death Do Us Apart" – a movie done with Polaroid still photographs together with super 8 footage. And now we are eagerly waiting to see her latest film "The Girl behind the White Picket Fence", "that centers around a Californian radio station that talks about love."

I love the fact that Stefanie Schneider's work is not only full of aesthetics and poetry but also profound human feelings and society issues. *"I believe, that I create my own aesthetic world. How far that reaches, I don't know. For me, aesthetics are not stand alone goods, there has to be depth to them."*

In our interview she gives us a very personal insight into her work, her future dreams and past demons, her morals and personal truth and truly inspires with her conclusion about the most important things in life...

What is the essence of being an artist for you?

Thank-you for your invitation to be in your magazine, I saw your last issue with **Daisy McCrackin** and loved it. I'm thankful to have the freedom to create and reflect on a full time basis. I love working with creative people, that's exciting to me. For me, being an artist is a 24/7 job, there is no 'off' switch. You just are, all the time. Through art, I find my way, there is no separation in my life from art. Art permeates my life in all facets. It's also about truth, honesty and the courage to be open and possibly being hurt but also the freedom to temporarily turn your back to society and live in tune with nature.

Do you believe that artists like you will help develop a more aesthetic world?

I believe, that I create my own aesthetic world. How far that reaches, I don't know. For me, aesthetics are not stand alone goods, there has to be depth to them. My latest contribution is my new film called "The Girl behind the White Picket Fence" the dream sequence of this film will be shown on Arte TV in the spring of 2013. Basically, I use my Polaroid still photographs consecutively and mix in some super 8 footage. It centers around a Californian radio station that talks about love. It stars Udo Kier, Heather Megan Christie and Steve Marshall.



Lonely heats Radio DJ:

„Hi you're listening to "The Lonely Hearts Radio Show", but I know you're really listening to your heart. You pretend it's me you're having a dialogue with but it isn't. Fess up. It's the continuous beating of your heart. You wish it would stop, that you couldn't hear it, because then you could talk yourself into believing you don't have a heart and you can't be hurt anymore. You hear your heart thumping and it makes you mad. Mad because if there were other noises surrounding you, perhaps the noise of another human being interested in you, you wouldn't hear your heart. The pounding noise just underlines with each thud

your loneliness. It's A LOT to ask me to FILL in for your unhappiness. Fuck you. I'm lonely too. I know you because I am you. I'm hurt too. So together we despise each other and need each other. Don't turn off your radio, I need you too. We'll be right back after this sickening commercial, I don't want to play it, you don't want to hear it, but we're lonely so we need the NOISE. „

It is for the viewer to decide how aesthetic it is. I hope you'll like it.

What are your morals for your life and your world?

Truth, love and vegetarianism. I'm exuberant by the growing interest in healthy eating, not only for the health advantages and the positive ramifications it has on our planet but primarily for the benefits it has on animals. The choices we make at every meal has more impact on our world than anything else each of us do. The next step for my project "29 palms, CA" is creating a sustainable self sufficient life in the desert. At the same time, I'm creating a project called "my future vision" involving all the people who, in my view are making a positive difference in the world.

What is your personal truth for your own life at this moment?

Completion.

What are your future dreams and your past demons and what coincidences that have made the most impact?

My future dream is to open a bio/vegetarian fast food restaurant. It is the future if there's going to be one. Need some investors though :) Coincidences are everywhere, if you're open for them. Some let

chance lead their life, others plan fastidiously. I'm always open to co-incidences. My life has been full of them. I'm so used to them by now, that I've learned to use these coincidences and embed them into my visions to create perfection. On the other hand I'm a perfectionist, trying to find a balance.

Why is it so difficult to photograph people you don't know?

I have to know a person well enough to see their true feelings. Trust is imperative for me and without it, I can't open up to chance. What meaning can a camera capture, if there's no emotional attachment?

Is there anyone you'd love to shoot?

Pamela Anderson who has done much for animal rights. I like the fact that she has used her fame for something she believes in. John Cusack is another for his political courage. I've a long list, but you'll have to wait for the photos.



What moments of your life do you wish you could hold onto for more than just an instant?

With photography, that instant and feeling is captured. Also I don't believe that moments you'd like to hold onto will ever vanish. They stay with you forever. What's important for me is going forward and bringing the good things, ideas and people with you.

How do you feel about the current hype and trend surrounding polaroids and analog photography?

There's no substitute for tangible beauty.

To wander about and aimlessness are some of the recurring topics in your work. I always wonder if for the human nature it is anyway possible to ever truly feel "I have arrived" for more than just moments. How do you feel about that?

It's the journey, not the destination. No matter where you get to in life, there's always another level of learning, which to me makes sense. I hope this doesn't burst your bubble but there is no "arrival". There are an infinite amount of steps in life. Could you even imagine ever having learned it all?

„ Love, lost and unrequited leaves its mark in our lives as a senseless pain that has no place in the present. The ex lover experiences the residues of love as an amputee experiences the sensation of a ghost limb. It is the tangible experience of "absence" that has inspired this piece. It is using the nuances of memory and imagination to explore relationships as we all have experienced them, to reflect about the (im)possibilities of the simultaneousness (of love) – a simple harmonic motion?" – radha mitchell



Thoughts about Berlin

I'm glad I saw it over 10 years ago. What made Berlin so great is disappearing very quickly. For me, It's changed and so I've decided to leave. What I miss about Berlin is the spaces of uncertainty that used to be so common. The roughness of the



sidewalks from decades of neglect, the funky little pubs that had such an air of

individuality about them. That it was such a magnet to artists from all over the world. I miss the soul the city had. When Potsdamer Platz was just a field. The houseboat docks near Treptower Park and the travel wagon communities, the alternative living spaces, the squatters that gave a voice to unconventional ideas. I miss the differences that Berlin had from any other major city in the world and the person mostly responsible for all this gentrification is Wovereit. He had such an opportunity to have made development unique, but sold out for the same thing as everywhere else. Imagine the death strip as a green oasis. I'm not against progress, growth or development but what has happened, robbed the city of it's individuality and anima. And isn't that, why people came here to begin with?

Thoughts about happiness

How can we talk about happiness without talking about what is happening in the world:

Fukushima, meat factories, poaching, religion, the pope, overpopulation, international weapon sales, GM food, bees disappearing, pesticides on our food, overfished oceans, seal slaughter, whale slaughter, politicians, stupidity, banksters, maximising profits. deforestation, nuclear energy waste, trophy hunting, depleted uranium to name but a few.

Until these problem have been slowed or reversed, there will be less and less happy people. If this world doesn't create a sustainable future, there will be no future.

Thoughts about the most important thing in life.

With the world population growing, the resources we rely upon are getting smaller and smaller and so everything is becoming more expensive. Only by living in harmony with nature can there be a sustainable future and through a greater respect for animals, can we ever find harmony between human beings.

There are some people I'd love to give a big thank-you to:

My parents Wolfgang and Maren for their love and guidance.

My assistant **Florian Reischauer** for his constant support.

My producer Caroline Haertel for her belief in my work.

My galleries:

Robert Drees in Hanover, Germany,

Scott White in the San Deigo, USA

Simon Gillespie in London, England and

Catherine Hug in Paris, France

I'd also like to thank all the actors and musicians I've been working with so much these last few years.

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Short synopsis "The Girl behind the White Picket Fence"

A careful young woman picks herself up from the cold reality of a failed relationship and finds what she hopes are her dreams come true in the garbage man she sees through the window of her dead parents old trailer. Past parental demons must be dashed if she is to determine her own destiny, which she does in the dumping of haunted possessions. This film is done with still Polaroid film and gaps are filled by your imagination. Schneider dabbles in our subconscious. Exploring and questioning the frequent coincidences we all find in our own life. In fact, these very fortuities which Schneider illustrates are integral to the creation and manifestation of her films and artworks. Fate is allowed to develop, enhanced and even plotted.

Main characters:

Hans, the mystic played by the veteran actor Udo Kier.

Heather's a young girl who's lost her parents played by Heather Megan Christie

Radio station DJ played by the comic Steve Marshall

Hank is the local garbageman played by Kyle Larson.

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All images "The Girl behind the White Picket Fence" by Stefanie Schneider ©