

Michael Najjar. Selected Works 1999 – 2006

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After the backward glance *z one zero – between simulation and hyperreality* at the Willy-Brandt-Haus in Berlin 2003, the Galeria Fernando Silió is now staging the second comprehensive overview of art by Michael Najjar with its *Selected Works 1999 – 2006*. Najjar's visual imaginings take the form of utopia, materialised and thematically interlinked in sets of work series. His art projects a vision of the future in which our social structures are caught in a process of accelerated flux under the drive of technological innovation.

His work series *netropolis* (2003 – 2005) explores the impact of digital technology on present-day urban life-space. By superimposing and digitalising panoramic views of real megacities, he gives birth to landscapes of virtuality which reveal the face of the future city as a material image of the densification of information. This in turn links to the need to upgrade the human body to re-equip and configure it for the high speeds of data networks. Neuronal brainchips couple the biological body to the computer and thus enable infiltration of the virtual network. Disturbingly evident in the computer-modified irises of the nexus up-grades *Tamara_2.0* and *Markus_2.0*, the portraits of the *nexus project part 1* series (1999-2000) fuse the human element with software to create a new being, part human, part machine, the *cyborg*. This vision can also be read as a premonition of a final frontier where the human being becomes pure software, endlessly interchangeable and infinitely rewriteable. Najjar's current work series from 2006 – *bionic angel* – alludes to this moment of re-creation. Patterned on idealised representations of the body from classical antiquity, the works in this series manifest both the inevitability of genetic self-generation and the irrepressible yearning for immortality that haunts humankind.

The motif of imperishability also marks the 18 pairs of portraits that make up the video and photo work series *no memory access* (2001 – 2005). In this series Najjar explores the implications of the pervasive storage of our memories and experiences on external data carriers. By disappearing the figures from the image space, Najjar starkly confronts the viewer with the impossibility of ever capturing and holding the reality of the moment.

An enduring hallmark of Najjar's video and photographic works is the virtuosity they display in blending real and fictional elements. Technically speaking, his art is based on

the computer-aided processing and modification of analogue data. Primary analogue data is fed into the computer and digitalized rendering the final photographic work as binary data with infinite reprogrammability. Najjar has taken a basic technique – the montage - and developed it in an entirely new art form. It is an art which offers a seemingly genuine visualisation of the future and at the same time – as in the work series *information and apocalypse* (2003) – it urges us to question the veracity of the media generated images now filling our lives.