

## **Francois Maher Presley , Hamburg 1996**

Speech at the opening of the exhibition "Zeitgesehen" at Torhaus Wellingsbüttel, Hamburg

With what love of detail, what skill and what intellectual imagination Winfried Wolk takes up social problems and in a picture secures a reality with all its manifold facets, is something truly fascinating. Indeed he reflects this rather, in the same way as a film does, creating movement, indicating breaks and interconnections, while for all their surreal transformation, his figures are distinctly true to reality.

The onlooker becomes an observer; fascinated, one looks through a window, through the artist's eyes out on to a street, a square, out on to a group of people that at first seems strange and one is initially reluctant to observe. Yet one looks on, enthralled, becomes part of the action, then the wall disappears, the window, the artist's eyes, the observer at first holding himself back, an amused part, a reflective element, touched because he recognizes himself in "The Emperor's new clothes". Wolk illustrates the Now.

Wolk is an element in observation of the times, he is contemporary in outlook and deploys his ironic, biting and at times wicked skill to banish what's going on to the canvas. He does not do so in elevated museum style, but conjures up for us something seemingly wonderful, also conjures up a non-existent power, the meanwhile no more than apparently tragic precedents, their rise and fall, the mendacity of a truth to which the consensus in this society permits itself to adhere. These are not preserved in a museum manner but rather in a museum fashion seen as laughable. Today a great deal really needs to be consigned to the museum, really because, when precisely observed - and Winfried Wolk's works give us the opportunity of doing so - we should have learnt from all that happens and proceeds around us, although really we only find the repetition of a story from which we have already very deliberately not learnt anything. In fact, much in our time belongs in a museum of risibility. A museum offering daily access, whose premises we determine ourselves when we decide how much or how little our social coexistence permits thought.