



## *Pink Panther*

After Beate Zschäpe had blown up the house she had been living in together with her partners in crime from the Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund (NSU), police investigators found a video as a claim of responsibility in which TV footage of their atrocities, selfmade animations and excerpts from the cartoon series Pink Panther had been interwoven. In this disturbing document we witness how a notoriously mischievous Pink Panther serves as cynical commentator to the trio's

"Deutschlandtour", as they euphemistically dubbed their deadly trips through Germany. The video owed much of the shock it caused to the history of its protagonist; the Pink Panther had been a figure in left theory at least since Deleuze and Guattari found its anarchic humour and subversive high jinx to be a perfect model for their demand to de-signify, depart from heired ideological turf war and simply paint your world pink. With the NSU video this playful character had itself been subverted, its fur painted brown, in the trio's attempt to further ridicule their victims.

When the Pink Panther appeared on screen in 1963, the cartoon opener seved as an abstraction for the events in the film. The semiotic mess caused by Pank Panther in the cast list is followed by a tumultuous chase for a treasure, a diamond called Pink Panther, turning the cartoon character's linguistic re-evaluations into monetary value that wanders from hand to hand, glides from pocket to pocket. But most of the time nobody seems to know where the precious gem can be found. Today, at least since the bursting of the real estate bubble, we have learned that the difference between symbolic value and monetary worth can be thin. In fact, we know that it shall never be even tried to exchange back all the 0s in the servers into their eventual material counterparts. We live in surreal estate, and debt has turned many into just as dubious objects as the houses they inhabit. On the other side, the cheap money spilling out of the printing presses is always ready to attach itself to new materials, to set foot on new shores. But where to find a new destination? What will be the silver bullet that immunizes against the capers of the markets, a promise that pays in solid substance, a place where the symbolic and the material truly meet, reinforce each other, and elevate balances as well as levels of social hierarchy.

Somehow things go wrong, auction results soar and fall within weeks, and everybody seems to be in Miami today. Just like Midas reversed, everything this money touches is cursed, instead of turning into gold, it inflates and turns into a bubble. The list of participants, this chain of precious associations, turns into tomorrow's nobodies. The more hectic a painting is supposed to make it rain, the faster it is washed away. We desperately need more McMiracles to turn the remnants of our ideological frameworks into proper, truly precious objects. Most know, though, that they will never be part of this game or that their chances are slim and so they depart for reveries or simply opt for putting it on, as bluntly as possible. Those with empty pockets conceive ever new ways to profit from metonymic, geographic or social proximity, produce new semantics and find sense where meaning was lost.

The Young Girl Reading Group takes place at Oracle on January 18, 2015, 7pm

Nikki S. Lee's film *A.K.A Nikki S. Lee* is screened on January 21, 2015, 8pm