



Left: Cover of Polly Apfelbaum's *Haunted House* (2011). Right: Atelier Amden (Photo: Katalin Deér)

*Polly Apfelbaum's latest exhibition opens on May 21 at the Atelier Amden in Switzerland. Curated by Roman Kurzmeyer, the show will feature Apfelbaum's new four-hundred-page poster book-atlas, which she discusses here.*

HAUNTED HOUSE. That's the first thing that came to mind when I was asked to do this show, which will be installed in a tiny mountain refuge, accessible only by hiking there. No electricity, no plumbing. There is a haunted house where we go in upstate New York, and I am sort of obsessed with it. My friend calls it a hillbilly meth lab, and it might be one of those. I've never dared to go in. I began thinking about fears—what could be in a place like that? Why are we so afraid of abandoned shacks anyway?—and for nearly six months I have found myself combing through Google, searching for images that, at least for me, conjure the feeling of a haunted house. But the idea for the show also came from actually taking a house apart. My father-in-law had lived in his house for fifty years, and as we were going through it we found so many pictures, the kind you'd see at a flea market or tag sale. These are such meaningful objects filled with memories that are sometimes just left behind. So I thought it would be interesting to use Google to make a collection of random images that seem similarly discarded. I decided to make an atlas of images for a haunted house.

It's a poster book and there are 350 images in it—pictures of old children's projects, family vacations, nature shots, and crude craft projects. It features everything from Noah's ark to piñatas, from Hong Kong to the Wild West, rainbow-colored pancakes to forget-me-nots. There will be one unbound copy so that visitors can choose an image to take. It's the first time I've

distributed my art that way—although people have been known to walk off with random parts of my work. But there will also be some moonshine they are welcome to take too. I wanted to bring the hillbilly to this pristine alpine location in Switzerland.

I do think often about how places have memories and how those can be just floating around in the air. With all of the images on the Internet, it's like they're floating around there too. I wanted to materialize these images because I think we're losing something without the concrete object. I mean, does anyone print out family photos now? I still love having them, even if that is very strange. But I've begun to embrace Google too, especially the randomness of what it means when you search for "haunted house" and you get a picture of somebody's dog.

To me, this new work seems very abstract, even if the pictures are representations of people, places, or things. All of this falls in line with the rest of my art. I'm either trying to get to abstraction or beginning with it. There has always been a tension between those elements in my work. In the past few years, I have changed the way I work in my studio. I spend more time thinking about how to make the work and how to play with elements of chance. So when I discovered the massive amount of images on Google and realized that I could even take them as I wanted, I was like a very bad kid in a very big candy store.

— As told to Lauren O'Neill-Butler

