

**TIM NOBLE & SUE WEBSTER**  
I LOVE YOU BLOODY FOREVER



*Bloody Forever*, 2011

The luminous signs *I Love You* and *Bloody Forever* shine big and bright in the modern Nicola Erni Collection building. They are light sculptures by the British star artists Tim Noble and Sue Webster, who have worked together since 1996. The two artists gather elements from their environment and use them in subtle and unconventional ways to express their artistic message. Their oeuvre consists of three-dimensional shadow works, metal and light sculptures in which they engage with the damaging influences of our consumer culture through new forms of portraying and reflecting.

*I Love You* und *Bloody Forever* are light signs that send out a clear message with their steadily blinking bulbs. They are borrowings from the monumental, omnipresent advertising signs of metropolises like New York, London, and Las Vegas, which have meanwhile become urban landmarks. Noble and Webster transform the kitsch of Las Vegas' neon signs, gambling, striptease clubs, and tattoos into iconic, neon Pop-Art trophies. Through their approach, the art-historical tradition of using objets trouvés by the nouveaux realists is transferred to sculptural objects randomly composed of contemporary everyday artifacts and trash.<sup>1</sup>

The work *Bloody Forever* has a direct connection to Las Vegas and the artists' earlier travels in the city. It refers to one of their first light sculptures, *Forever*, from 1997. The word "forever" perpetually blinking in blood-red, with drops flowing down, subtly reinforces the inevitable

ideas of eternity. Like almost all of Tim Noble's and Sue Webster's works, this one, too, is contradictory and triggers opposing feelings in beholders: romance and pain, love and hatred, friendship and alienation, negative and positive, as the word "bloody" before "forever" means not only "dripping blood", but also "cursed" and "damned".

But the luminous signs also send distinctive messages: *I Love You* is definitely precisely the wording to signify the strongest possible affection and esteem that a person is capable of having for someone else. No response is necessary, it is eternal—*Forever!* This claim of completeness is also common to the word "forever". It identifies something that has neither a beginning nor an end in time, something that exists independent of the phenomenon of time. Timeless, classical—according to Plato, this is the most genuine form of being-in-the-world, underlying everything.

With *I Love You Forever* in the Nicola Erni Collection, two autonomous missions thereby meld to one whole as though destined to be together. A *Gesamtkunstwerk* that finds echoes in the real, private lives of the artist pair, too, but nonetheless presents itself from today's perspective as ironically questioning. At the most immediate level, the work by Tim Noble and Sue Webster symbolizes the couple themselves, who broke up in early 2013 after sharing their lives for twenty years. Like light and shadow, presence and absence, representation and abstraction, also the meanings in the works by Tim Noble and Sue Webster move in a constant tension.

Florentine Rosemeyer

<sup>1</sup> In this context, reference must be made to the *Environmental Art* movement from the early 1970s, which often found its radical artistic concepts in the vastness of the desert. Already in 1962, Daniel Spoerri, one of the most important proponents of Object Art, set a striking example with *Study for the End of the World No. 1*. His assemblage, which was composed of chance finds from the city, self-destructed in the Nevada desert by means of a self-timer. This critical confrontation with throw-away society and the littering of the world finds no better equivalent today than Las Vegas' neon graveyard.

*I ♥ YOU, 2000*



I



YOU