Eat your words – how did this series come into being, was there any particular moment of inspiration?

When artists talk about inspiration they always sound clumsy, with few exceptions! Something inspires you, but you are very rarely able to describe exactly what it is. And even if you are, sometimes it's just something trivial. There is no manual for inspiration in the sense of: "How does my new TV set work?"

Let me put it differently then – are there any main themes that you have implemented in this series?

There certainly are. How can I express certain impressions I got, how can I transform them, raise them to another level? All that art constitutes beyond an attempted exact naturalistic reproduction of an object. Let's take a simple example: "clouds". There are profound essays on this topic in history of art – from clouds by William Turner, Caspar David Friedrich, René Magritte to those by Gerhard Richter. In the face of what already exists, you naturally do ask yourself: is there anything new that I could do?

And nevertheless, I see a cloud, I have a sense of the moment, of the wind, the mood, the light, and somehow I want to capture everything. Then I think about what has already been done in art, and I feel completely uncreative. And then I come up with the idea of restaging objects from works of art: balloons, leaves, clouds, etc.

The pictures are staged. How do you select locations? And what does "staged" mean here?

Eat your words is conceptual, less intuitive than earlier works. Even right at the start, when choosing a location. The documental urban landscape that I find must possess something that supports the story that I "make up". For instance, a bridge that simply ends without any reason. But not every object works with a given location, so I experiment on site. In principle, my finished picture is a remix of the photographic reproduction of reality. "Remix Reality": I separate the connected elements and restage them so that something new evolves. To be precise, objects are positioned differently, the light is partly fake, a certain mood is emphasized particularly. For instance, the cloud is staged on location, but then its position within the picture is changed later. It's a manipulated picture that is not "factually" right, but it is right emotionally. The rest of the story happens in the observers' minds. That part is not my job.

What topics, stories interest you here? And why are they staged in urban space and not in a studio, for instance?

Because it is my living environment. I love urbanity, the dynamic, the exchange, the pace, the cultural currents and context that clash at the central station where I have my studio. Urbanity is my environment – without being naive. Of course I also see the dead ends of city planning, the drift and the erosion, and ultimately also the gentrification. The classic Hollywood movies of the 1930s were all completely shot in studios, even if adequate real scenarios were available all around. They used imitations of reality made of papier mâché and Styrofoam. I do it the other way round. I only work outdoors, if possible, I take urban space and turn it into an artistic fake, sometimes with a bit of effort. (Laughs.)

I generally archive all ideas in a sketchbook. 95 percent of them never materialize, but some things do. A scene that I observed in a bar one evening. The bad feeling that I get concerning certain political tendencies. But also the struggle with yourself that lasts your entire life. I see and work based on my own experience and socialisation. Sometimes I would like to swap with someone, reinvent the person who I am, but that is very hard. "Art" always entails a little self-liberation – in the sense of: each project lets you act out another facet of your self.

In principle, every concept of a series of pictures also evolves from intuition. I cannot separate the two. It always starts with pictures. Like the classic 1950s American street photographers, I set out with the camera in my hand, and I look around me and see what happens. I let things happen, listen, observe, and take photos. Sometimes I spend weeks collecting hundreds of pictures this way. And then I look through them and I notice correlations. This leads me from the intuitive process to conceptual work. That's how "the dark sides of sparkling" or "deprived to reality" came into being, for instance.

Back to Eat your words. What was the work process in actual practice?

I don't have any reservations about using Photoshop. But if I can actually "realize" an idea, then I try to do that. For instance, the cloud is 1.20 m wide and made of cardboard and cotton wool for the motif, and it hangs on tripods with strings so that it floats freely. This way the picture's light and mood are not distorted, it stays homogeneous. So, it is staged and authentic at the same time. The photographs are digital, medium format. At the end I erased the tripods and the string for a perfect illusion.

And what does the title of the series mean?

"If you eat your words, you admit that something you said was wrong." – The title insinuates that something in the picture is not right. The balloons and the straws are taken from their contemporary art context. For instance, Banksy often works with balloons, or Tara Donovan also uses straws in her sculptural works.

There is an ongoing scientific study with and about this series. Your pictures are being studied with Eye Tracking methods. What is that all about?

To challenge seeing, that's a standard program for photographers. If you don't do that as a photographer, you might as well just take snapshots. There are enough mobile phones in the world for that.

Eye Tracking is a scientific method for capturing vision that uses a device to measure how images are perceived via eye movements. The most common form of art work is the golden ratio and the central perspective that leads to symmetry and harmony. All of them are rules of classic image formation that I handle rather playfully. Sometimes I break them, sometimes I emphasise them. Either is possible, though it should not be random, but purposeful. So, my main concern is the key question about the effectiveness of images. Is it possible to construct the optimal picture for the observer, and above all: what will be its effect? Maybe such a picture will simply be only empty and dull.