



HELMHAUS ZÜRICH

6 February to 29 March 2009

Boden und Wand Wand und Fenster Zeit

**Polly Apfelbaum, Katharina Grosse, Bruno Jakob, Adrian Schiess, Christine Streuli,
Niele Toroni, Duane Zaloudek**

An Exhibition by Roman Kurzmeyer

This exhibition presents works by seven internationally acclaimed artists. *Boden und Wand / Wand und Fenster / Zeit* is an investigation of the current status of Modernist ideas in contemporary art, with a particular focus on the role and significance of abstract painting in the art of today. Besides paintings, this presentation also interlinks installations, moving images, objects, new and older works. The artists, from Europe and America, and from different generations, all actively engage in what has been called 'transmedia' painting. As the works on show demonstrate, this painting by definition poses the question as to its connection with other mediums and how this may be highlighted.

The work of **Niele Toroni** (*1937, lives in Paris) exemplifies the new departures in painting in the light of the emergence of European conceptual art in the 1960s. Ever since 1966 he has followed the same procedure for all his work: using unmixed, water-soluble industrial acrylics he makes imprints of a no. 50 paint brush, repeated at regular intervals of thirty centimetres, on a variety of picture supports, although usually straight onto a wall. In his hands painting becomes an elemental, repeatable, self-reflective act that is nevertheless precisely locatable in space and time. The imprints are not formed by means of a moving brushstroke, as such, but by precisely laying the two sides of the brush flat against the wall, one after the other. The brush is not used as a painting tool, for it simply leaves an 'imprint' of itself.

Bruno Jakob (*1954, lives in New York) developed an early fascination with all things invisible, hidden, latent, lost, unrealized and non-representable, which he has since variously explored in painting. He uses invisible paint substances such as water, energy, light, air and thoughts in conjunction with canvas, paper or photography. For the Helmhaus exhibition he is taking the radical step of using his thoughts to paint not only the walls of an exhibition room but also the air within it. In connection with this work Jakob has commented that, as a painter, he is concerned neither with the present nor the past but rather is searching for a form through which the viewer may make contact with the future. His work is important for its critique of the deeply embedded trust our own civilization places in visual evidence.

For **Christine Streuli** (*1975, lives in Berlin) making pictures is all about reproduction. The large-format, 'walk-on' paintings that she has made for Helmhaus are not to be viewed from a distance, like paintings. They are to be experienced much closer to. As she herself has said, they are supposed to grab the viewer by the ankles. Streuli's works use elemental



artistic forms such as line, plane, point and grid, signs and ornamentation. She is not alone amongst modern painters with her interest in ornament, for abstraction can in many senses be read as the latest stage in the history of ornament. In the stairwell she is showing a ceiling light bought in Damascus, made of old and new components taken from a number of different lamps. Both the techniques seen in this piece and its contents were of interest to Streuli in connection with her own work, which is very much about collaging and combining otherwise alien elements to create a new identity.

Katharina Grosse (*1961, lives in Berlin) is represented in this exhibition by two large-scale canvases from an installation in the Queensland Art Gallery in Brisbane (Australia), where they were shown as vertical formats. However, instead of being hung on a wall in the usual way they were in fact stuck into mounds of earth that Grosse had had dumped in the gallery space. In recent years Grosse has increasingly turned her spatial works – painted using a spray gun – into non-places, where particular emphasis is put on spatial disorientation and the need for constant reorientation on the part of the viewer. For instance, she may shift parts of the installation around while she the painting process is still under way, in effect treating them as autonomous elements. In this exhibition it is the unpainted patches on the exhibited paintings that serve as reminders of the conditions of their making in the original installation. One canvas was transferred directly from the Australian installation to the Helmut exhibition; the other was subjected to further work in the studio.

Duane Zaloudek (*1931, lives in New York), in a literal reading of the Modernist paradigm of planarity and of the unity of surface and support, presents an empty sheet of paper as a hat. A modest alteration to the form produces an everyday, all-American object, that for all the irony that may be intended here, nevertheless triggers countless images and stories. Zaloudek shows his white-in-white paintings as installations. He makes wooden boxes in which he not only stores, but also exhibits, these watercolours. The open boxes are presented on a metal table of his own design. Not only do the watercolours make the viewer conscious of the process of perception, they may also encourage him or her to engage in a more differentiated level of self-perception.

The Post-Minimalist floor pieces of **Polly Apfelbaum** (*1955, lives in New York), which are both sculpture and painting, are places of transition characterized by instability and latency. Apfelbaum's interest is in systematically arranged, coloured fields presented in a way that transposes her work into an ultimately indeterminate realm somewhere between painting, sculpture and installation. Like Adrian Schiess, Apfelbaum's preference is for horizontal works; ignoring the walls of the exhibition space, she concentrates on extending coloured fields across the floor. For the Zurich exhibition she has used unpainted fabrics decorated with sequins. Individually hand-cut, using scissors, the pieces are arranged on the glossy painted floor so that the picture plane leads into the space with works by Adrian Schiess.

The paintings of **Adrian Schiess** (*1959, lives in Mouans-Sartoux) explore the changeable nature of colour, space and light, with their reflective surfaces palpably interacting with their surroundings and the viewer. His early floor pieces articulate various aspects of space, with some relating to the floor as such while others are painted in a manner that documents the movement of light and shade while the artist was working on them in his studio. Some years ago, Schiess also started to develop his material pictures: multi-layered, voluminous, extremely dense pictures into which he works painted paper and studio detritus such as crushed paint tins. All the very different manifestations of his work have one thing in common, namely fragmentation. Schiess never sets out merely to create a 'meaningful' image; on the contrary, his work is about scattering meaning and allowing the viewer to experience a different mode of open, liberated, free-floating seeing that is not pinned down by the picture.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue, published by edition fink, Zurich, with original contributions by all the artists. On sale in the exhibition for CHF 38.00 / Euro 25.00.



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