

KÖNIG GALERIE

ANDREAS SCHMITTEN
SESSHAFT

26 JUNE – 29 AUGUST 2021
ST. AGNES I NAVE

KÖNIG GALERIE presents SESSHAFT, the first solo exhibition of Andreas Schmitt in the NAVE of St. Agnes.

The exhibition shows new large-scale spatial sculptures. The monumentality of the works is emphasized by the high walls and sacral atmosphere of the former church space.

In the past, "overpresentation" was common, especially in churches. Schmitt reinforces this impression with elaborately crafted pedestals, some of which are more prominent than the sculptures they support. The reduced formal language of the works and the perfect craftsmanship with which they are made encourage associations with design. The comparison, however, ignores an essential difference: design is focused on functionality, while Schmitt's sculptures solely fulfill their purpose in themselves as artistic objects.

The title of the exhibition, SESSHAFT [Settled], refers to the human way of life. Since humans abandoned the nomadic lifestyle tens of thousands of years ago, they have left ever more obvious traces of their existence, also in the form of artistic production. Globalization is making this lifestyle increasingly vulnerable.

Schmitt deals with questions about forms of life: For him the pandemic was a turning point that put a spotlight on humanity and how we live together. Whereas Schmitt's sculptures had previously often been negatives of human bodies, bodily fragments are now clearly visible. These elements in the form of legs, arms and a face merge seamlessly into basins. As a place of purification, these usually serve to rinse away bodily secretions, an action that suddenly took on special significance during the pandemic.

SESSHAFT challenges the viewer to reflect on current ways of life and human interaction.

Martin German about SESSHAFT:

So, here they are: the latest works by the sculptor Andreas Schmitt (*1980 in Neuss, Germany), on display in the shotcrete NAVE that is the central exhibition space of the KÖNIG GALERIE. The works were developed over the last two years, in the artist's home studio, a place that's steeped in history and located in the central outskirts, not far from a farm attraction. They were created during a period partly characterised by social paralysis: the pandemic halted the rush of time and brought back to light what had been overwritten or seemed conveniently forgotten. Catapulted out of the matrix of routine, we gained a completely different awareness of the details inherent in everything, from the Egyptian Pyramids to Oberhausen's Centro shopping mall, right on the doorsteps to our homes, where we stayed the whole time.

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EXHIBITIONS

ANDREAS SCHMITTEN
Sesshaft
ST. AGNES I NAVE
26.06 – 29.08.2021

AYAKO ROKKAKU
Born in the Fluffy Journey
ST. AGNES I CHAPEL
26.06 – 25.07.2021

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Opening Hours
Tue – Sat 10 AM – 6 PM
Sun 12 PM – 6 PM

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This newfound proximity to our surroundings brought its subconscious flooding back into view: where streams of desire and constant motion ground to a halt, the cultural desolation of our public spaces after 30 years of neo-liberal acceleration was exposed – the small-town railway stations and pedestrian precincts of West Germany being the perfect examples. Andreas Schmitt and I grew up in the 1980s Rhineland, amid the slow agony of the welfare state and atypical “West German” public spaces that, looking back, at least matched the largest of all the halls in the KÖNIG GALERIE for neatness, although they were actually probably quite different.

And yet it's in these halls that Schmitt's most ambitious group of works to date nestles, with resolute effect, showing neither restraint nor discretion nor modesty. In fact, the attention these works demand verges on the excessive, just like their colour scales, which range from signal red and turquoise through to bright pink and beyond. As always, the rhetorics of the plinths, curtains, showcases and other display furniture merge and eclipse each other; display props and display items compete, thwarted by each other's constructions. The result is a language of eloquent emptiness that – through its seated, standing and lying figures – mirrors the history of the representation of the figure, as well as its gradual exorcism and dissolution into minimalism and conceptual art. The flow of this ensemble stems partly from the multi-tonne constructions, a material inertia that reflects wishes as hygienically as it disregards them – but also, to an almost equal degree, from the acrylic and other materials that are used.

Andreas Schmitt's artistic work comes almost 30 years after the invention of the World Wide Web, whose own inherent monumentality has over the years influenced the categories of place, time, presentation and reception that sculpture must inevitably confront. But Schmitt's work doesn't follow the logic of a sculptural art that disavows images and atomises into the social and physical; far more – whether fragmented arms, abdomens, legs, heads or anything else – every element of Schmitt's work speaks. What talks from its belly is the monumentality behind its clear-cut user interfaces, a monumentality that brings a new uncanniness to existing ideas of inwardness and substance, and is founded on the engineering ethos of pure practicability and penetrates every pore of our lives.

Time and again, Schmitt's work varies the primeval form of the basin, used in purification and initiation, and its outflow, representing the threshold between life and death. It therefore marks out voids, substitutes. His works are imprints, marks of an absence, or perhaps of a memory. After all, every one of these works has a biographical starting point, which Schmitt takes, builds on and gradually camouflages to create objective, plastic-metaphorical instruments for managing human desire. Ultimately, his works provide stages for the art-world theatricals of consumption and reception to be performed, administered and orchestrated within the NAVE by the staff of KÖNIG GALERIE. At a moment when much-needed global relativisations are eroding the traditional values of western art history, Schmitt's work is on the offensive: it takes up these values, revealing itself as a mock-up of them, de-camouflaged from the periphery, only to withdraw again in an instant. Possibly so the artist can carry on working in peace, from his home in Neuss, on something more long-term in nature.

Andreas Schmitt (*1980) is a German sculptor. He has had solo exhibitions at the Kunstmuseum Bonn, the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, the Museum Kurhaus Kleve and the Kunsthalle Bremerhaven, among others. His works have also been shown in exhibitions in Paris, New York, London, Brussels, Tokyo and Los Angeles, among others, and are represented in numerous public and private collections. Andreas Schmitt lives and works in Neuss.

STIFTUNGKUNSTFONDS



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