

Press information

Peter Stauss | Professional Sleep

November 3 – December 22, 2012

Opening: Friday, November 2, 6 – 9 pm

Having worked mainly in sculpture during the past two years, Peter Stauss has now returned to painting, his original medium. His new work will be on show for the first time in a major solo exhibition at carlier | gebauer.

Peter Stauss' paintings appear wild, animated, and at times almost chaotic. Colour splodges are warring with textures, human figures share the surface with dogs and monkeys, order gives way to uncertainty. The construction of the image does not follow the formal structure of accepted rules of visual perception. There is no foreground, dividing the surface into hierarchies and thereby attributing an illusionary "secondary" status to areas and objects in the background.

All figures in these paintings, no matter if human or animal, can be distinguished from the other surfaces and textures through the meticulously-chosen stroke of the brush which highlights facial features and body shape. They stand in contrast to the composition of the two-dimensional, far more spontaneous and rougher remainder of the painting. Carton-board, the ostensible medium, creates a solid surface that becomes part of the work as it is visible at various points. The larger-sized works are assembled from several individual pieces of carton whose organic format determines the structure of the works. The borders and edges of the carton segments are on the one hand crossed by the figures and gestures and thus partially obscured by them, yet wherever the shapes terminate at the physical edge of a piece of carton and do not continue onto the adjacent carton, they create welcome fractures that prevent the paintings from becoming too much of a homogenous ensemble.

Accident is a part of the creative process. The planes created by the brush alternate with a treatment of the surface space in which elements are arbitrarily obscured then destroyed again. This creates a density of structures and hues which is highly complex, because it was not merely deposited intentionally but grows predominantly out of the shapes which have gained their form from the remainders of a random erasure.

Both figures and sharply-outlined shapes merge into an arrangement which is permanently threatened, and so evokes some sort of loss or memory. To a certain extent, the themes of the paintings continue this idea of insecurity – the dogs and monkeys wearing clothes, almost human in their gestures and poses, their faces portraying the same emotions. Their expressions of suffering, incompetence and disenchantment on the other hand appear to satirise their human counterparts. This represents a subversive restructuring, an attack on the psychology of human constructs of reality.

As an emblem, the dog represents logic and astuteness, he can read tracks and when in doubt is able to choose the right one. Yet at the same time, it is a living creature adept at deferring to the conventions of human society and becoming the faithful companion of its master and owner. Over the course of centuries, humans have

transformed this contradictory relationship between its non-human descent from “raw nature” and the almost unlimited options of its domestication, into a sophisticated strategy for justifying the symbolic order from the primordial basis of the non-human sphere. The paintings of Peter Stauss scrutinise these mechanisms of validation and shifting traditions and power balances.

In “No Body”, the protagonist has long been deprived of his own prominence. Without a body, only equipped with legs and a head, he is literally a “no-body”, taking its cue from a drawing by the British cartoonist and caricaturist William Hogarth. The body has become powerless in face of menace, it has become useless. The dogs populating the upper half of the pictorial space already make use of supernatural powers, applying the magic to breathe new life into the constructivist forms.

The painting “Rotes Atelier” (Red Studio) shows dogs and monkeys hammering away next to each other as if in the forge of Vulcan, while the scene below is reminiscent of a famous moment from the cinema history: Lauren Bacall handing the tied-up Humphrey Bogart a cigarette in the film *The Big Sleep*. In the painting, Stauss has replaced Bacall with a monkey who shares a cigarette with a tied-up human being.

The artist contrasts the eagerness of the hammering workmen – who are, typically enough, not beating on metal but again wrecking constructivist forms as symbols for utopian and idealistic prevarications – with the impotence of the shackled man. The ambivalence between constant pursuit of idealism on the one hand and political impotence on the other is not also reflected in the symbols, coats of arms and insignia worn by the protagonists, both animal and human.

The themes of the paintings appear as an admission of the futility of all intent and volition yet become on closer inspection a metaphor for the realities of humankind’s creative acts within the irreconcilable contradictions of idealism and necessity, affirmation and criticism.

Peter Stauss was born in the South of Germany in 1969 and studied at the University of the Arts in Berlin, where he graduated as master student in the class of Professor Bernd Koberling. He works and lives in Berlin.

carlier | gebauer

Peter Stauss

1966 born in Sigmaringen, Germany
2011/12 visiting professor at the Haute École d'Art et de Design
Geneva, Switzerland
lives and works in Berlin

Education

1987-89 studies of architecture
1989-95 HDK, Berlin
1995 Meisterschüler by Bernd Koberling

Solo exhibitions (selection)

2012 *Professional Sleep*, carlier | gebauer, Berlin
2011 *THE NEVERENDING END*, carlier | gebauer, Berlin
2010 *Peter Stauss: Skulpturen*, Galerie Crone, Berlin
2009 *Peter Stauss: One Man Show*, Galerie Crone, Berlin
2008 Ritter / Zamet, London, UK
Sei gerecht!, Galerie Crone, Berlin
2006 ART- COLOGNE, Solopresentation at Aurel Scheibler Gallery, Berlin
Gallery Gasser Grunert, New York
Lügner, Galerie Crone Andreas Osarek, Berlin
2005 *Genius Loci*, Wand Boden Decke, Berlin
2004 *Sympathy*, Ritter / Zamet, London
2003 Galerie Ascan Crone, Andreas Osarek, Berlin
2002 *Des Alpes et des Pyrenees*, Galerie Aurel Scheibler, Cologne,
Germany
1999 Förderkoje auf der ART-COLOGNE 99, Germany
Kartoffeleesser, Galerie Aurel Scheibler, Cologne, Germany
1998 Kunsthalle Luckenwalde (with Thomas Scheibitz), Germany
1997 *Nimm Deine Bahre und geh*, loop, Raum für aktuelle Kunst, Berlin

Group exhibitions (selection)

2012 Muscle Temple Painting Society, Helsinki Contemporary, Finland
2011 I AM A BERLINER, Kunsthalle of the Croatian Society of
Artists, Zagreb (touring)
Captain Pamphile - Ein Bildroman in Stücken, Deichtorhallen,
Hamburg, Germany
2010 *PHYSICAL*, Autocenter, Berlin
A moving plan B - Chapter ONE, selected by Thomas Scheibitz,

- Drawing Room, London
Groupshow, Galerie Crone, Berlin
Captain Pamphile - Ein Bildroman in Stücken, Städtische Galerie
Waldkraiburg, Germany
- 2009 *Berlin 2000*, Pace Wildenstein, New York
Cargo, Autocenter, Berlin
- 2008 *Ensor Schrecken ohne Ende*, Von-der-Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal,
Germany
5000 Jahre Moderne Kunst - Painting, Smoking, Eating, Villa
Merkel und Bahnwärterhaus, Esslingen, Germany
Bonjour Monsieur Ensor, Gmür, Berlin
- 2006 Grieder Contemporary, Küstnacht close to Zurich, Switzerland
- 2005 Ritter/Zamet, London
- 2004 *Happy Days are Here Again*, David Zwirner, New York
- 2003 Ausgesucht von Thomas Scheibitz, Koch und Kessler, Berlin
Colorado, Galerie Klinkhammer / Mezner, Düsseldorf, Germany
- 2002 *Whisper - Sammelausstellung zum elfjährigen Jubiläum*, Galerie
Aurel Scheibler, Cologne, Germany
- 2000 Leo Koenig, Inc., New York
Randori, loop, Raum für aktuelle Kunst, Berlin