

## **Miriam Böhm, Charlotte Posenenske, James Turrell**

### **The Other Space**

**Opening reception:** 8 March 2013, 6-9pm

**Exhibition:** 9 March – 19 April 2013

We are very happy to announce the exhibition "The Other Space" with Miriam Böhm, James Turrell, and Charlotte Posenenske, which will open on 8 March at the gallery. Different times and media will be united: works by James Turrell and Charlotte Posenenske from the 1960s will be shown next to works by the contemporary photographer Miriam Böhm. Thus the exhibition also brings together photography, fine print, and sculpture. What the selected works have in common is their engagement with the relationship between space and beholder, and the phenomenon of reflexive viewing.

All three artists play with perception. They challenge the beholder to engage in reflexive seeing. The works address spatiality, or to be more precise: they are concerned with the interplay between figure and background, or object and space, for example real space and stage space with Böhm and Posenenske, or the pictorial space with Turrell and Böhm. Another thing these artists have in common are the processes of visualisation, the condensation and shifting of objects, which let the space emerge and make it visible.

### **Miriam Böhm**

Miriam Böhm sets up her series of photographs like closed stages on which she carefully places her objects. The objects are arranged in careful layers in the visual space. Through overlayings, picture-within-picture constructions, and the formatting of characteristic relationships between figure and ground, she creates disorienting shifts in perspective. Her subtly planned pictorial spaces demand from the beholder an independent way of seeing: almost automatically, the eye wants to explore the reality of these images.

The central theme of her new series 'Reference' and 'Prospect' is the motif of overlaying and condensation, both of which create strong spatiality. The titles of the two series already hint at the represented content. In 'Reference', for example, paper and cardboard objects are arranged in such a way as to create surprising spatial interplay. The beige-whitish pieces of cardboard before a light grey background lean against one another at an angle, sometimes they seem to float in space. Using recursive techniques, for example re-photographing the original photograph, the artist at first develops various perspectives and multi-

dimensional planes, which she then reduces back to the two-dimensionality of the photographic paper. The formal repetition and overlaying leads to a literal shift which explores not just the original, real space, but also the photographic space, which it makes visible for the beholder. Since the works are conceived as series, they also contain a time element.

The central concerns of these works are interplay, reality, and transformation: how do figure and ground relate and interact with each other? How does the visual space become real space? Because appearance and reality are not immediately transparent, Miriam Böhm quite playfully inspires an investigative spirit in the beholder. All the more astonishing is the fact that even after these spatial labyrinths have been decoded, the question of whether the constructed and artificial is not quite as real as reality itself remains.

### **James Turrell**

James Turrell deals with quite similar issues. Since the 1960s, he has been engaging with expansive installations that address above all light as a central phenomenon. Turrell wants to create sites of perception and experience. His works are based on a performative approach.

The group of works of the print series 'First Light - Blonde' was made 1989-90. Turrell refers here to his earlier spatial projects, among them also the corner projection entitled Catso. The series of 20 aquatint prints entitled 'First Light - Blonde', uses five different tones and refer to original drawing sketches from the 1960s. They underline the art historical importance of this series.

Turrell sees 'First Light - Blonde' as a series that explains his light-space installations, to which it is conceptually linked. In their density, the prints provide an overview of his various creative phases. Furthermore, the series already confronts the beholder directly with the phenomenological concerns of Turrell's oeuvre. Etching as an artistic technique plays a special role here: Turrell chose aquatint as that form of etching that is most sensitive to light, which makes very subtle gradations of colour shades possible on a large area. The limitations of the chosen medium – a protracted work process, various steps that need to be planned very precisely, the very limited possibility to make corrections, a very demanding printing technique – make the extraordinary quality of the prints even more remarkable.

Turrell's series of prints is part of international museum collections, among them the Tate Modern, London, the Los Angeles County Museum

of Art, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Similarly to Böhm, Turrell also explores space. Planes become three-dimensional objects that seem to float in space. Turrell's work belongs in the context of the self-evidence of the work of art, void of history, which is characteristic both for the art of the New York School and for minimal art. Turrell and other Californian conceptual artists of the light and space movement of the 1960s wanted to dematerialise the artwork as such through light. The titles of the prints underline the idea that they refer to nothing at all: neologisms (Phantom, Fargo, Decker, Tollyn) reminiscent of phonetically inspired sound descriptions or mantras that aim at a pure perception of experience.

Turrell, Böhm, and Posenenske inspire the beholder to engage in a reflexive seeing, which means that the beholder keeps retesting his or her seeing and continuously varies it. Every change of perspective leads to shifts in perception. The oscillation between two-dimensionality and three-dimensionality and the spatial and sculptural quality of the light enable the beholder to reconstruct his or her own perception reflexively. At issue here is also the notion of space as a mental realm.

*'I'm interested in delving into and exploring the architecture of space created by light. Mostly we have dealt with space by displacement or massing of form. The art that I make covers this ground between form and actually forming space using light. It is a structured space without a massing of form. This quality of working the space in between so that it limits or expands the penetration of vision is something that intensely fascinates me.'* James Turrell

### **Charlotte Posenenske**

Like Turrell and Böhm, Charlotte Posenenske also plays with human perception. The years she worked at the theatre early on in her career, and her engagement with stage architecture, influenced her work a great deal. Posenenske's minimalistic works, objects and sculptures from the 1960s are derived from paintings with a distinct relief character. Paintings where the oil or acrylic paint is scraped on with a palette-knife, which already have strong spatial references, formed the foundation of her work in the 1950s.

In her spatial sculptures, she uses consistently industrially produced materials like corrugated cardboard, particleboard, angular plates, or square pipes. The use of these materials was one hand to allow for a variable design, but on the other hand exclude any artistic subjectivity of

a creative process. Posenenske's goal was to radically question the traditional notion of an autonomous work of art by replacing this work with an industrial artefact. A good example for this strategy is the object Vierkantrohr Serie DM (1967). It consists of three identical sets of four elements each of a ventilation system of a factory hall, which, screwed together at fillisters, can be varied in any order. Objects and forms are extracted from their direct and everyday function, and their aesthetic quality is revealed. The objects are arranged in such a way that the space is very clearly related to the object. Posenenske – just like Böhm and Turell – calls on the beholder to engage in new ways of seeing.

*'The objects are supposed to have the objective character of industrial products. They should not represent anything other than what they are. The division of the arts that was hitherto valid no longer exists: the artist of the future should work with a team of specialists in a research laboratory.'* – Charlotte Posenenske