

**Meyer Riegger**

**Gustav Kluge**

Schwarzmalerei Lichtlöcher

23.03. – 11.05.2013

With the exhibition "Schwarzmalerei Lichtlöcher", Meyer Riegger presents the second solo exhibition of the artist Gustav Kluge in the Karlsruhe gallery space. The pictorial content in Kluge's painting is formed by the overlaying of spaces and situations as well as the distortion of human features. The artist paints in a gesturally expressive manner, in which paint functions as an autonomous subject, lending the represented theme a concrete body. In Kluge's characteristic style, the substance of the paint not only develops into a picture, but shapes the painting's subject into an nearly plastic image through its relief-like application. With this the artist generates differentiated pictorial surfaces, which shift between smoothness and layers of paint growing out from the canvas in voluminous porousness.

In his current exhibition the artist presents a selection of pinhole camera photographs for the first time - an artistic method which Kluge has been engaged with continuously for several years alongside his painting. Kluge's photographic works are characterised in particular by the use of double exposures, which the artist takes up as a photographic theme. The soft focus of the pictures, which is induced by the camera's construction and references early photography, shows the process of taking on shape in a quite similar way as is expressed in the thick paint application of Kluge's paintings. The light-rendered imagery of his photos exhibits structures and silhouettes that seem almost like phantoms: a landscape for example, which shows a figure, snow, light and sun, while the image's overexposure simultaneously addresses the fading in and out of presence and absence. Then again, there are objects, machine parts, industrial products, motives that wind and coil, only developing into a picture - and making room for a connection to Kluge's painting - through overlaying.

The painting "Nachtgerümpel" (2012) shows such a situation: structures unfold from different nuances of black; shoes, clothing, objects, hemmed by kitsch and military utensils, which are on a carpet-like, colourfully mottled floor in a room; in their presence they prevail, but elude allocation. The painting "Grab eines jungen Soldaten" (1983), an early piece by Kluge, shows a figure encircled by flowers and foliage. The body of the corpse merges with the surrounding plants, blending and fading in a meandering state of concealing and revealing. This becomes the theme of the painting "Von Gesang geleitete Zangengeburt, observiert von fleckigen Dunkelmännern" (2013) in a similar way, here a machine-like figure sets a child between its mother's womb and reality, describing the transitional moment between being, existence, and their formulation. Time and again, Gustav Kluge paints places where space and body merge, in a physical as well as figurative sense. These are situations that paraphrase or designate human antagonisms, or formulate them as a notion, in Kluge's paintings they take shape as figures, as in "Gestalt eines weißen Mannes, Kurt" (1996)".

Along these lines, Gustav Kluge's portraits also play a special role. They depict artists and scientists, placing them in a discursive context. For example the Portrait "Rickels" (2012) shows the literary and media theorist Laurence A. Rickels half hidden, stepping out from behind a curtain. On the right side of the curtain, a shadowy, larger than life portrait of the actor Bela Lugosi looms, whose role as Dracula and lifelong identification with this role are analysed by Rickels in his "Vampire Lectures". The left sheet of the curtain shows a mutated embryo from the 17th century, which is preserved in a small central German town until today, and is considered a model for the portrayal of aliens. In a lecture series titled "Creatures", Rickels discussed such fictitious and real monsters and their representation. Here Kluge implements Rickels' analysis subjects as projections, he causes them to emerge as the portrait subject does: in an allegorical manner. By contrast, Gustav Kluge paints his portrait of the composer and essayist Wolfgang Rihm in a more gestural style. These are Kluge's first portraits of a musician, which the artist made while listening to Rihm's compositions: A sequence of lines sketch his figure, tracing it as a mobile imprint, which follows the temporal moment of the music as a silhouette and a shadow figure behind Rihm's likeness. In the close-up portrait however, furrows of paint range over Rihm's face, capturing it in a rhythm and nomenclature specific to the brushwork and colour, which fall in line almost sculpturally with Rihm's music.

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Translation by Zoe Claire Miller