

GALERIE GISELA CAPITAIN

G Ü N T H E R F Ö R G

September 7 – October 26, 2013

Günther Förg's ninth solo exhibition at Galerie Gisela Capitain is dedicated to the artist's early monochrome work.

The focal point of the show is a historical work complex from 1990 consisting of monochrome fabric paintings in red, blue and two shades of green. Shown for the first time since 20 years, they recall the very beginnings of the artist's career and were displayed for the last time in Förg's important solo exhibitions in Kassel (1990), Gent and Leipzig (both 1991).

Chronologically as well as thematically, they are closely connected with Förg's early grey paintings of which one is included in the show as a reference. Painted in the 1970's during his time at the academy in Munich, the grey paintings mark the starting point of his artistic practice expressing an attitude of refusal: Using the non colour grey, Förg intended to bring back the painting to it's absolute point zero in order to redevelop his work from there.¹

The fabric paintings belong to one of the first group of works following this period and can be considered with their prefabricated canvases as a kind of "Ready-Made-Painting". The decision to use fabric was on the one hand a direct reference to Blinky Palermo's cloth paintings, but on the other hand also driven by the fascination for the "matte and uniformly coloured surfaces" which Förg – according to himself – "would never have been able to achieve". For the first fabric paintings Förg used red bunting he had discovered in Italy at rallies held by the Italian Communist Party. As the material was slightly translucent, the fabric was first mounted on door leaves. An example is the red horizontal painting from 1980, also part of the show. Later the fabric was stretched over signed canvasses and additional colours of fabric followed.

The fabric paintings are paradigmatic for Förg's artistic thinking: Formally and thematically they document his absolute freedom in dealing with the idea of painting. Artistic influences are not denied but immanent, hence his characteristic method of making art manifests itself: creating art about art. Furthermore, the fabric paintings demonstrate a way of thinking spanning across genres and media, a distinctive feature of Förg's work from the very beginning. Godard's films with their chromatic cuts are as present as the monochromatic wall areas of Förg's own extensive wall paintings, creating and defining space.

Thematically and formally a series of 10 lead paintings from 1986 completes the show. The series of lead paintings – the first of these were created at the same time as the monochrome fabric paintings – define a further stage in Förg's artistic practice: The splitting of the individual monochrome work accompanied by a development away from the image and towards the object.² In 2004 Förg described the series of lead paintings retrospectively as a "link between panel painting and space-oriented and space-consuming painting".³

The focus of the exhibition on the early stages of the artist's career and the monochrome works was deliberately set. "The monochrome" – in Förg's own words –

¹ see Gohr, Siegfried: *Wie Bilder sprechen, ... Zur Malerei von Günther Förg* in: Groetz, Thomas (Hg): *Günther Förg, Bilder Paintings 1973-1990*, Berlin 2004, p. 33

² see Günther Förg in: *Ein schweres Bildobjekt in etwas Schwebendes verwandeln. Günther Förg im Gespräch mit Thomas Groetz* in: Groetz, 2004, p. 51

³ ebd

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"was a starting point for me".⁴ The exhibition at Galerie Capitain illustrates how far Förg's work positions itself from rigorous abstraction. His paintings are not abstractions but rather perceptible in their materiality.⁵

⁴ Günther Förg in: Groetz, 2004, p. 49

⁵ see Gohr, Siegfried in: Groetz, 2004, S. 34