

Press release

Carroll Dunham

Monotypes

April 16 to May 21, 2016

Löwenbräu Areal, Limmatstr. 270, 8005 Zurich

Opening: Friday, 15. April, 6 – 8 pm

Tuesday – Friday 11 – 6, Saturday 11 – 5 and by appointment

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is pleased to present Carroll Dunham's second solo exhibition at the gallery.

Carroll Dunham's extensive work includes paintings, drawings, prints and sculptures, in which he has continuously developed his imagery since the 1980s. Coming from abstract but organic forms, he developed a universe in which his subjects became personalities by means of repetition and continuation. The most famous among them is a figure with a phallus-like nose, which wears a hat reminiscent of 1950s crime-stories. In later works the figures started to present their vaginas from the rear.

Dunham's figures appear to be partly primitivistic and partly referring to the pictorial vocabulary of comics. Nonetheless, they do not copy or appropriate the cosmos of pop-culture or art history. Rather, they come into existence through the act of painting – which takes place between Carroll Dunham's hand and the panel – of whatever kind, canvas or a wooden plate for printing. In the 1980s, Dunham started painting on wood and using the grain of his material as a structure for the nascent painting.

The new monotypes show a further step in the development of Dunham's work. In the printing procedure he paints directly on the wood, which later serves as a printing plate. In doing so, he uses the texture of the wood as a prestructure, underlining knotholes and emphasising certain lines. The technique corresponds ideally with the imagery Dunham shows: The bodies of his characters respond to the wooden texture – the knothole with the anus and the finespun texture of the wood with the vagina.

Dunham uses simple lines and forms to create extraordinary views. The sexually charged motifs mask the fact that they are composed with great care. The whole body of the bathing nude, as it jumps into the water, fits into the sun in the background, while the arms, which plunge into the water, overlap the yellow circle. Just as the sun serves as a background for the nude, the circular buttock serves as a background for the figure's feet. The overall impression seems obvious. But the closer one looks at the monotypes, the more grotesque they become. It becomes unclear if the sun is really the sun or rather a circle whose only function is to literally round off the composition.

Dunham's surrealist play with the images that emerge in the grain the longer one looks, is repeated on larger scale in his paintings. The longer one concentrates on the prints, the more their parts fall apart: The breast becomes a wavy line, the nipples become small circles, the hair becomes part of the wooden texture. Dunham's monotypes, with the veil of amplified grain overlaying them, seem to be taken directly from the pop-cultural unconscious.

After the watercolor dries on the plate, the printing is done. The printing procedure itself is also partly unconscious. Though the picture is printed precisely, it is changed thoroughly in the monotype. The grain can change the surfaces. Lines that are firmly applied can expand. Separating the printing plate from the paper may remove single colour patches. However, the images evolve from long planning. They are faceless figures which grip the spectator with staring body orifices.

It is not possible to entirely explain the fascination that the viewer feels when encountering the prints. The impression that they leave is partly obscene, partly banal, and sometimes inexplicable. The ambivalence of the works is as big as the breadth of Dunham's work.

Carroll Dunham was born in 1949 in New Haven, Connecticut, USA, and lives and works in New York. His first exhibition at Galerie Eva Presenhuber took place in 2014. His work is represented in major museums and private collections worldwide, including Albertina Museum, Vienna; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; Sammlung Olbricht, Essen; Tate Gallery, London. Recent solo exhibitions include Denver Art Museum, Denver (2014); Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2009); Millesgården, Stockholm (2009) and Drammens Museum, Drammen, Norway (2006). Major museum group shows include Ileana Sonnabend: Ambassador for the New – 2014, Museum of Modern Art, New York; Post Picasso: Contemporary Artists Responses to This Life and Art, Museo Picasso, Barcelona, Spain

(2013); This Will Have Been: Art, Love, and Politics in the 1980s, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2013); Print/Out, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2013); Selections from Hammer Contemporary Collection, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2010). The latest Group Show with Carroll Dunham at Eva Presenhuber, Painting Now, took place in 2012.

Tillmann Severin

For further information please contact Andreas Grimm (a.grimm@presenhuber.com) at the Gallery.

Parallel shows: Matias Faldbakken, Thingumbob Screens Overlaps
April 9 to May 21, 2016
Maag Areal, Zahnradstr. 21, 8005 Zurich
Tuesday - Friday 11-6, Saturday 10-5 and by appointment

Inside Out, Curated by Alexandra Economou
Catharine Czudej, Camille Henrot, Rashid Johnson,
Jamian Juliano-Villani, Wyatt Kahn, Ella Kruglyanskaya,
Tala Madani, Calvin Marcus, Ebecho Muslimova, Michael Williams
April 16 to May 21, 2016
Löwenbräu Areal, Limmatstr. 270, 8005 Zurich
1st floor
Tuesday - Friday 11-6, Saturday 11-5 and by appointment