

CONTEMPORARY FINE ARTS
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CHRISTA DICHGANS

PLÜSHTIEROPER

12 January – 18 February 2017



Schwarzer Papierflieger (Black Paperplane), 2013
oil on canvas, 80 x 55 cm / 31 1/2 x 21 2/3 inch

Contemporary Fine Arts is pleased to announce the exhibition “Plüschtieroper” with works by **Christa Dichgans** (born in 1940 in Berlin), which will be opened on 12 January at 7pm with a presentation of her new publication *Texte zu Bildern*. Chris Dercon, the former director of the Tate Modern and incoming artistic director of Berlin’s Volksbühne will explore her career, her mode of working, and her motifs in a conversation with the artist.

Christa Dichgans, who has been painting for more than five decades, has been considered for a few years now as a pioneer of a German pop art. In the catalogue to the exhibition

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German Pop at Schirn-Kunsthalle from 2014, we read: “As early as 1968, Christa Dichgans formally anticipated a visual vocabulary that was to become popular in the US above all through the post-pop artist Jeff Koons in the 1990s and 2000s.”

The artistic career of Christa Dichgans began after her studies in Berlin at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste. The still life quickly became her most important genre, and the principle of mass and accumulation determined her painterly engagement with the consumerist behaviour of the years of the so-called economic miracle. When the artist was in New York with a fellowship from the DAAD in 1966, she chose something for her son out of a heap of toys at the Salvation Army. This encounter became the initial spark for her artistic practice that is informed by social criticism and realism, for which Dichgans has stood for her entire life. “In New York, Dichgans developed that pop style oscillating between cheerful and enigmatic, playful and critical, marked by numerous ruptures, which in 1966 became the trademark of her work”, writes the curator Belinda Grace Gardner.

In the following years, Dichgans broadened her thematic range; her painting style became freer, more gestural, and more individual. Her painting often concentrates on the city as a condensation of the existential. Skyscraper-like towers become a recurrent subject. They appear to the artist as grotesque symbols of power and arrogance. Accumulations of toys became over the course of her development battlefields – also of a life lived. Especially in recent years, these topoi are ironically counteracted by a new painterly lightness.

This is how Chris Dercon described it in his opening speech: “Dichgans’ raw, excessive, saturated, and labyrinthine painting also precedes the fractal geometric painting that was inspired in the 1970s by the mathematician Mandelbrot. So, Christa Dichgans painted chaos theory and computer paintings before they even existed in this form. And then there are perhaps important parallels with fellow artists: I’m thinking here of the scary child figures by Paula Rego, the alienated dolls by Marisol, or of Louise Bourgeois’ erratic balls of wool. They all had one thing in common: they were all women artists, and therefore were placed in the waiting loop. [...] So, are the toy still lifes by Christa Dichgans perhaps portraits of her direct environment, or even self-portraits? Her accumulations of all kinds of everyday objects have an enormous innate sense of confidence and resistance. They create friction. They seem to be sleeping, but at the same time they are witnesses, and they can feel something. That’s what makes them so uncanny.”

The presentation on the bel étage of Contemporary Fine Arts’ new gallery space assembles works from the 1960s to today.

The publication *Texte zu Bildern*, just now published at Hirmer Verlag und presented on the occasion of the exhibition, assembles short essays and poems on her works by personal and artistic friends like A.R. Penck, Georg Baselitz, Piero Dorazio, Johannes Gachnang, Heinz Stahlhut, and others, as well as a conversation between the painter and Andreas van Dühren.