

UNTITLED

Per Inge Bjørlo, Monica Bonvicini, Georg Herold, Jim Lambie, Jonathan Meese, Markus Oehlen, Julian Opie, Thomas Ruff, Andreas Slominski, Dirk Stewen, Paloma Varga Weisz

Exhibition duration: January 28 – February 24, 2017

Gerhardsen Gerner is pleased to announce a group show with a selection of works by the artists represented by our galleries in Oslo and Berlin, among them Per Inge Bjørlo, Georg Herold, Markus Oehlen, Julian Opie, Thomas Ruff, Andreas Slominski, Dirk Stewen, and Paloma Varga Weisz.

Per Inge Bjørlo (born 1952 in Spjelkavik, Alesund) driven to artistic creation. He can't help it, it simply flows from him. Many of his key works have dealt with the dynamics of the "inside" and the "outside", and have titles such as "Inner Space", "Fear", "Reclining" or "Hope". In this respect, it is important to the artist to utilize many different artistic media, with which he can harness this urge to allow the inside to come out. His work ranges from woodcuts and drawings, to paintings and steel sculptures, to multimedia installations. Here, Bjørlo is interested in unusual and often industrial materials. He paints onto synthetic felt or burns it, creating brownish-black shapes. Burned and charred materials or a room created from used rubber tires ("Inner Space I", 1985) emits strong odors. Bjørlo not only engages the visual sense of the viewer, but also quite often irritates their sense of smell.

At the age of thirty *Georg Herold* (born 1947 in Jena) may have been exposed to his strongest influences during his studies at Hochschule der Bildenden Künste in Hamburg under Sigmar Polke and Franz Erhard Walther in the late 1970s. He found the point for his starting work in Hamburg. When violence escalated in West Germany in the German Autumn of 1977, Herold presented his first work "Präsentation der ersten Latte" (Presentation of the first lath) at the academy in Hamburg. The roof laths as the material and content undermined all expectations of either aesthetically or politically interpretable art. Herold's technique of setting traps is perhaps inconceivable without the "art punk" once cultivated jointly with Albert and Markus Oehlen, Werner Büttner and Martin Kippenberger nor without Duchamp's linguistic compositions including sexuality as a metaphor.

Markus Oehlen (born 1956 in Krefeld) is another important representative of the *Neue Wilden* movement, which was especially active in Germany during the 1980s. The artists used a punk attitude that stood in opposition to *Minimalism*. Oehlen has continuously developed his work and, in parallel with painting, also works on sculptures and musical projects. His later works are increasingly inspired by the perceptual experiments of *Op Art*, with printed image interferences that occur in grid-like patterns above and below the layers of the picture. Along with forms that are oriented toward computer aesthetics, this brings an aspect of serialism to the images. It can be understood as a humorous and ironic commentary on the expressive nature of painting and – in retrospect – on the *Neuen Wilden* movement itself.

Through his practice *Julian Opie* (born 1958 in London) has developed a concise and reductive formal language. Drawing from influences as diverse as billboard signs, sculpture, 17th & 18th Century portraiture, popular comics and classical Japanese woodblock prints, Opie implements computer technology by cutting out the outlines and coloured shapes. This enables him to make two-dimensional explorations of his

subjects in silkscreen, vinyl, LCD and LED. Opie's interest in traditional portraiture, in painting and sculpture, and modern sources, is evident, and he is especially keen on combining new technology with ancient art historical media and themes.

The oeuvre of *Thomas Ruff* (born 1958 in Zell am Harmersbach) belongs to a tradition of German photographers directly indebted to the conceptual aesthetics and teachings of Bernd and Hilla Becher, whose unique artistic approach turned to the original New Objectivity project and adapted it to the eighties. Ruff shared similar conceptual concerns and approaches with his colleagues at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, who included Andreas Gursky, Candida Höfer, Axel Hütte and Thomas Struth. An obstinate user of large-format cameras, Ruff adopts a cold style, his gaze is as neutral and disaffected as possible, and his flat and technically impeccable images are rich in details, evincing his formal concern with bareness and pure captures. Throughout his oeuvre, Thomas Ruff repeatedly addresses the traditions of photography. His *Portraits*, *Interiors* and *Nudes*, to mention just three of his legendary series, have gained iconic status.

For over twenty years *Andreas Slominski* (born 1959 in Meppen) has developed an eclectic and subtly interrelated corpus, which repeatedly defies recognition, alternately drawing upon everyday objects or experiences and escaping into a quixotic realm of personal motifs, and oscillating between found objects and handcraft. Since around 2006, Slominski has been producing polystyrene paintings formed out of chiselled and layered slabs of polystyrene whose surfaces are populated by multifarious figures, decorative motifs, cartoonish doodles, and fragments of text. The artist's most recent work includes high-heeled shoes and a handbag carved from polystyrene, spray-painted in a range of garish colours to create knowingly impractical objects which themselves vaguely mimic strewn flowers or Christmas decorations. These works therefore mirror their combination of kitsch artifice and highly exacting facture.

The Italian-born sculptor, painter and installation artist *Monica Bonvicini* (born 1965 in Venice) deals with sex, power and control, though there is a lot of humour and ambiguity in her work too. She learnt about fetishism from her economics teacher "If one really believes that the personal is political, then the first scene of the crime is the bed," is Bonvicini's point of view. "I read very early on Freud's *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Carl Jung, Eric Fromm, Wilhelm Reich. I learned about the Marxist concept of fetishism in high school, where I was lucky enough to have a great economics teacher who had studied sociology with [Red Brigade leader, Renato] Curcio in Trento back in the good old days. I was also interested in Franco Basaglia's idea of democratic psychiatry, which was still much discussed when I was a teenager. Confining people, defying sicknesses and diseases, are things that I always found rather creepy."

Jim Lambie's (born 1964 in Glasgow) approach to art making is informed by a few fundamental ideas. A rock musician before he became a visual artist, he uses color in a way that is deeply rooted in color theory and specifically relates to the concept of *synesthesia*, an analogous experience between music and the color spectrum in which the stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to automatic, involuntary experiences in a second sensory or cognitive pathway. Colors are harmonies and pattern and repetition form rhythms. Sourcing his material directly from the modern world, Jim Lambie references popular culture, often drawing his

subject matter from music and iconic figures. He makes use of everyday objects and materials – both as reference points and as original objects, transforming them into new sculptural forms, re-energizing them and giving them with an alternative function. With each element constructed from found objects he creates sculptures that are steeped in the spirit of the UK punk explosion with garish tones, bold display, and references to both bands and songs from an array of movements.

For more than a decade *Jonathan Meese* (born 1970 in Tokyo) has provoked, seduced and irritated art audiences in Europe with raucous, libido-driven performances and dense, dissonant installations, packed with all sorts of detritus, fragmented photo imagery, graffiti-scarred painted surfaces and the like. All of his projects relay a sense of urgency—anarchical abandon with a dose of absurdist humour—the only unifying theme being art itself and the creative process. Propelled by socio-political undercurrents—especially those pertinent to Europe’s post-Cold War identity—and an acerbic critique of mass culture, Meese’s efforts convey a feverish, psychosexual energy. Despite the abject look of much of the work, there’s a “Wagnerian grandiosity” in its scope and scale. Meese demonstrated early on a kind of quirky knack for effectively combining textures, colours, unorthodox materials and appropriated imagery—especially photo stills from popular films, like the James Bond series, and music icons, such as the Beatles. He merges these multifarious elements in ways that are consistently amusing, although, perhaps, too canny to be truly funny. *Paloma Varga Weisz* (born 1966 in Mannheim) sculptures play with the wondrous, which our modern longings gladly seek in the long forgotten and distant past. In the middle of the 19th century a group of English painters founded the "Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood". Through painting they aimed to study nature with great attention and took the solemnity, directness and authenticity of medieval art as a model for their works. The historicizing sculptures by Varga Weisz are based on this search: in a time of upheaval and change, there is that pre-Raphaelite purity and authenticity in her art.

The themes of nature and handcrafts are prime topics of feminist research. For centuries, the male has been assigned the cognitive, reason, the outer and science, whereas the female was connected with the emotional, the irrational, the inner and the unpredictability of nature. Banned from artistic creation and relegated to the position of the model, handcrafts often remained the only means of artistic expression. Paloma Varga Weisz addresses these issues through her work with her signature style.

Drawing is an important aspect of *Dirk Stewen*’s (born 1972 in Dortmund) practice. For him drawings are an image of the mind, a reflection of internal life. Visual ideas can be caught in mid-flight. The process of watercolor painting demands boundless trust in what will be. It presupposes trust in the moment, in the gesture of the brushwork and the combination of water and color. The watercolors and gouaches are a counterpart of Dirk Stewen’s large-format black works: light, quick and as fleeting as moments, or notations.

For further information please contact Maike Fries, Gerhardsen Gerner, Berlin / Oslo : T: +49-30-69 51 83 41, office@gerhardsengerner.com or visit our website at <http://www.gerhardsengerner.com>