

KÖNIG LONDON

KARL HORST HÖDICKE

25. NOVEMBER – 23. DECEMBER 2017

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OPENING: 24. NOVEMBER, 6 – 9 PM

Approaching his 80th birthday, Hödicke's early influences during the 1960s included filmmaking in New York to the role of artist-as-curator in Berlin, where he set up the influential 'self-help' gallery Großgörschen 35 with Marcus Lüpertz. He was subsequently a pioneer of German Neo-Expressionism and New Figuration with Baselitz, Immendorf and Penck. He was one of the main protagonists and drivers of the New Savages or Junge Wilde movement in 1978, which arose in the German-speaking world in opposition to established Minimal and Conceptual strategies. In this respect, Hödicke's figuration, and his connection with various formal 'networks' in painting – as well as new social systems for small organisations represented by the model Großgörschen 35 – sit together with a tradition on pushing gesture and spectacle through expression.

It's important to consider that Hödicke's main subject – the changing nature of Berlin – has been consistent for the last forty years. This is important, because, if the city of Berlin embodies history itself, then Hödicke's pictures present not only a complex overlapping structure of alternative art historical and aesthetic time, they also show a subjective response to the ever-changing nature of political, social and economic world historical time.

Of course, time is manifest in painting within a complex network or system in its own right: it exists simultaneously in the history of the Western Canon, in the Marxist labour time of a work's production, and psychologically and non-mechanically (in opposition to the duration or score of the media such as film, performance and music) through our optical response and reading to the work's painted surface. Hödicke problematises this network of time further, through his quick expressive execution of pictures that contain the experience of a city of over fifty years. For example, he recently told the curator Hans-Ulrich Obrist: 'you have to finish your painting before it vanishes in the fog'. In this sense, the figures and the urban environment in Hödicke's work also become parts of a portrait of a city in which everything is immediately folded in with clarity, including its artistic community and historical change.

Importantly, Hödicke has had his studio in Dessauerstraße next to Potsdamer Platz since the 1970s, where modification at that time was slow (he called the place Tunguska after the 1908 explosion in a sparsely populated area of Eastern Siberia, which flattened 2,000 square kilometres of forest). In turn, after 1990 when people came flooding in and the first cranes went up, his studio provided a huge window onto massive development. His drawings and paintings represent this subsequent implosion of expansion, yet the paintings in this exhibition

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celebrate the time immediately before the fall of the wall – the Tunguska period of relative tranquillity before arduously assembled transformation.

Hödicke's paintings have also been said to express dread, revulsion and an existential nausea in decayed city scenes and figure studies through their depiction of zombies, malevolent birds and satanic children, yet he also has the ability to express reverie with lucidity and clear precision. In the paintings at König Galerie, we see Hödicke as the urban flâneur: *Einstürzende Neubauten* (1984) and *Peepshow* (1977) show scenes of sex, music and hedonism, where an immediacy of touch is evident in the architecture of apartment blocks, street signs, and the Berlin Wall, as well as figures going about their day-to-day business.

Hödicke's work connects with mainstream conversations around the possibilities of expressionism connected to institutional critique in an era of painting after the internet. This exhibition not only celebrates a body of work by a hugely significant artist on his 80th birthday, it is a timely exhibition that furthers the ongoing discourses around painting in the late 2010s.

Text: Andrew Hunt

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication with an essay by Andrew Hunt.

Born in Nuremberg in 1938, K. H. Hödicke moved to Berlin at the age of nineteen to pursue his studies at the Hochschule der Künste (now the Universität der Künste), where he would later teach as a professor from 1974 until 2006. A co-founder, in 1964, of Großgörschen 35, a revolutionary cooperative gallery in West Berlin, Hödicke has continued to make a profound mark on the Berlin art scene. His prolific body of work includes paintings, sculptures, and films.