

SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY

Press Release - April 2015

MARLON WOBST

We are very pleased to announce the exhibition *Kondition* by MARLON WOBST, the third solo show of the Berlin-based painter at SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY.

Marlon Wobst (born in 1980) is an artist of subtle imperfection. Wobst's engagement with awkward bodies, bizarre compositions, and ambiguous genres has for a whole been the foundation for his painterly narrations. The 24 works in the current exhibition bear testimony to this fantastical understanding of everyday uniqueness.

Kondition - the title of this exhibition is open to many interpretations: is the issue physical fitness [a primary meaning of the term in German], as Marlon Wobst has often painted clumsy athletes? Or is what is meant here really more a condition, a condition of the right to exist? The open-endedness of the title applies also to a wide range of aspects of the artist's work.

The large boat painting *Löschteich*, with its orange-pinkish colour so typical for Wobst, and its monumental scale, immediately defies all convention. The strangely indefinable flesh-coloured paint takes up almost the entire canvas. Only in a misshapen, bluish rectangle in the middle does the beholder's gaze get to rest. On closer inspection, we see a boat in the middle of the blue field. Once we focus on this figurative element, we can also slowly make out the silhouettes of bathers emerging from the bulky colouring. The supposedly naïve endeavour of skin-on-skin shades turns out to be an almost strategic technique; the organic in colour and form is Wobst's tool for making human states emerge directly on the canvas, and at the same time embedding them into unusual 'landscapes'.

The unpretentious visual vocabulary of his works builds directly on Wobst's sensitive choice and layering of paint. The generation of his works is a process of applying paint, scraping it off again, and delicately shaping objects and figures that hide within his many-layered paint melange. The quite striking, conspicuous paint construction interacts dynamically with the delicacy of the purposeful brushstrokes and lends his pictorial spaces a depth difficult to grasp.

In most of the small formats shown in the exhibition, the artist devotes himself to a somewhat different choice of motif. The canvases seem as if cut from other paintings, indeed as if assembled as a kind of painterly collage. In the painting *ZU VERSCHENKEN/ Drifter* (2015) for example, there is a whimsical box, lost in a khaki-green space, that is filled with seemingly random, collected limbs. From

above, it is beset by a partial painting of a car with prominent exhaust fumes. Is it an accidental combination, or is it a film sequence where, we might guess, the driver of the car wants to get rid of the dubious box as quickly as possible? The artist doesn't show his hand.

Fragmented body experiments are often featured in Marlon Wobst's oeuvre. The genre of the portrait – if we can even say this here – receives a very unconventional treatment in the large painting *Bei den Blaublütigen*. This time, it is single, tattooed limbs that seem to float in a muddy brown space. Wobst printed the blue tattoo motifs, taken from pop culture, with a linocut technique onto the body parts painted in oils on the canvas. Wobst recently produced motifs similar to the hand adorned with 'TGIF' in cooperation with the printing press *Keystone Editions* in Berlin as a series of lithographs. He seems to want to explore the limits of representing the body: the lines between human being and plastic, organic and artificial, become blurred, and often we cannot be sure what we are seeing.

That the repetition of motifs is a frequent occurrence in Marlon Wobst's painting becomes already apparent in his early works. The current works, however, seem to be strongly influenced by the (art historical) picture-in-picture theme: in the middle of the canvas, motifs from other works appear, indeed, sometimes entire paintings are quoted in a miniature format. Like a window onto a different dimension, they offer insights into the artist's relational way of thinking, suddenly opening up to the beholder quite crazy perspectives on other works. The surface is a playing field for spatial experiments: in *Angebot*, Wobst has one of his faceless figures present two earlier works, and in view of the original size of these works, he does so with a truly fantastic ease. The figure dangles the 2012 painting *Echo* in its right hand, and with its left raises *Verlängerung* (2014). Is a comparison being made here? *Verlängerung* was exhibited early in 2015 at Kunsthall Charlottenborg in Copenhagen, and with it Wobst won the first prize of the Spring Exhibition 2015, entailing a solo exhibition at the Kunsthall next year.

Marlon Wobst explores the pictorial space through a continuous development of his motifs. The canvases seem to be linked through continuous narratives, and yet each one opens a completely new perspective on his artistic universe. Whether it is detached body parts, nonsensical car trips, or dubious crime scenes in the forest – in the final analysis, Wobst's paintings are a challenge of the beholders' intellectual fitness. With the aid of the painterly tools and a bold implantation of other works, he shares his surreal visual narration with the unsuspecting beholder, where he leaves him to explore the curious events on his own.

Text: Clara Tang; Translation: Wilhelm Werthern, www.zweisprachkunst.de

The opening is on Thursday, 2 April 2015, from 6 to 8 pm. The exhibition will be on show from 3 April to 9 May 2015.

For further information, please contact us at: mail@schwarz-contemporary.com