

# SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY

**Press release - September 2018**

**MARLON WOBST - Haare**

**31 August to 30 September 2018**

We take pleasure in announcing the fifth solo show of Marlon Wobst at SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY.

Felt is a coarse and sturdy material. At the beginning of the 1960s, Joseph Beuys introduced felt to contemporary art. Culturally speaking, it has a rich history, and yet it is a 'poor' material, with its functions of providing warmth and protection, served both aesthetic and practical purposes, for example during actions and happenings. Robert Morris, on the other hand, at the end of the 1960s became interested in those qualities of the material which he saw as 'skin-like'; he hung strips and pieces of felt in sculptural arrangements on the walls of galleries and museums. Later, Martin Kippenberger slipped on a felt suit, and everybody immediately recognised this as a reference to Beuys. The artist Wiebke Siem develops her 'Soft Sculptures' with a view to the history of fashion, art, and design. We might describe the bulbous material silhouettes that Rei Kawakubo designs for her avant-garde fashion label *Comme des Garçons* as walking sculptures.

When we look at the new wool felt works by Marlon Wobst with all this in mind, they seem practically unburdened by this history. The artist, born in 1980 in Wiesbaden, encountered felt more or less by accident. Usually, this material is popular with hobby handicraft people and with people interested in esotericism, who make clothing out of it. In this context, he studied the foundations of felting, and now he uses this technique to expand his practice as a painter. In the field of the felt works, the subjects of his paintings reappear: sex and beach scenes, breasts, penises, pubic hair, tan lines; tennis socks, athletes, people bathing or swimming - down to the reproduction of a strange shopping list the artist once discovered on the floor of a supermarket. Wobst works mainly with small and medium formats, but the largest felt work so far measures 2 x 2.7 metres.

In terms of the palette, the felts follow the artist's paintings, who works with "primary colours in a world of mixed hues".

Felts, as the art historian Monika Wagner points out, "are not cloth, they don't consist of an orderly system of threads, and their structure is not the result of an interlocking of warp and shot. Rather, the animal hair is tumbled and inextricably felted with the aid of water, warmth, and mechanical pressure. [...] Felt gains its diffuse greyish-brown colour from the chaotic entanglement of its components, into which, unless it is dyed, the colours of the used fibres are added, without them forming a pattern in the mesh." In Marlon Wobst's art, this anarchic element is both form and content. Perhaps the libertine humour (and the interest in pop phenomena like sports) in Wobst's works is in terms of attitude closer to Jim Henson's felt Muppets than to the greyish, earth-coloured art shamanism of Joseph Beuys. In the case of a tennis ball, felt improves its flight and bounce quality. It ensures a certain air drag and slows the ball down. It bounces a little softer on the ground. With his felt works, Marlon Wobst has opened a new game. The two-handed backhand of Venus Williams, forceful and precise, suits the image perfectly.

Text: Kito Nedo

Translation: Wilhelm Werthern

The opening reception is on Thursday, 30 August 2018, from 6 to 8 pm.

For further information and images, please contact the gallery anytime:  
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