

A Drawing Exhibition In Two Parts

Lieber Künstler, zeichne mir! / Dear Artist, draw for me!

Part 1: Abstraction, Concretion, Notation and Structure

Part 2: Figuration, Illustration, Notation and Sign

The title of the exhibition project, *Dear Artist, draw for me!*, paraphrases the well known painting series by Martin Kippenberger *Dear Painter, paint for me*, begun in 1981 as a series of commissioned works, which he himself commissioned from artists and poster painters. Kippenberger's system of delegating other people to create his groups of work is here clearly not the subject of this two part exhibition. The overriding interest however is to invite the gallery artists from Semjon Contemporary and others, ideally, to create drawn works for this exhibition, or to select them. *Dear Artist, draw for me!*

The drawings by my gallery artists are to be placed in relation to selected works by other artists outside my own small gallery cosmos, whom I hold in esteem and in doing so to contribute to an open dialogue. By the same token, I plan to integrate some examples of drawing taken from various artists over the last decades. In doing so, I wish to make visible and thematically draw attention to sources of inspiration, congruities and differences in relation to one another.

The exhibition is to be divided into two consecutive parts:

The first part addresses *Abstraction, Concretion, Notation and Structure*, and brings together works covered overall by the term Abstraction. Here examples of work, of conceptual abstract drawings and works by artists in the category of concrete art, together with drawings for installations and notes, e. g. compositions (note sheets) by contemporary composers, in addition to abstract-structural approaches in the field of drawing will be brought together and placed opposite one another.

The second part, *Figuration, Illustration, Notation and Sign* addresses – basically – the Figure. The term Notation which appears in both parts of the exhibition bears reference to the fact, among other things, of the permeability between the two parts. Not without reason this term allows for the drawing as study, as experimental sketch and composition sheet, but can also be understood as a self sufficient artwork. Some of the artists also have common points of reference in both parts 1 and 2.

Since the beginning of modernism the tendency of abstraction has become an independent artistic approach and this separates itself from the figurative/depictive method of approach in art. A position was formulated, which saw a sketch not only as a preparation for the more highly valued painting or sculpture, but which regarded the drawing as an autonomous, self referential artwork. Once abstraction was introduced and had established itself as a legitimate position from both the point of view of production and reception, it consequently lead at the same time to the freeing of the academic conception of the definition of reality and made way for a variety of styles, concepts and positions. The battle of the "isms", of the myriad of conflicting stylistic directions, has given way, since the 1990's to a generally recognised plurality of „everything is possible“. This two part exhibition attempts to bring together, places in opposition diverse approaches to drawing, sounds out common ground and points of divergence and provides an exciting visual experience.

Part 1: Abstraction, Concretion, Notation and Structure

The marking out and conquest of the white sheet of paper with a pencil, a piece of charcoal or another working material without the handicap or the intention of making a kind of reduction or abstraction of a real object, a person or landscape, first became possible after particular artists in the history of modernism had developed the parameters. Via the artists Kandinsky, Picasso / Braque, Malewitsch and van Doesburg, among others, the terrain became marked out in which the formal reduction of the depicted real thing was developed into an artistic stance and language. This led to the invention of images which lay beyond the projected object. The image was sufficient in itself and was in some cases a cipher to a new way of thinking. This new won freedom led to new ways of seeing, which manifested themselves in a wide variety of directions in art. One of these early directions was Suprematism / Constructivism. Constructive art from this point, created its own system of proportion, one might almost say system of surveying, developed from geometric proportion and colour harmonies. The word Concretion in the subtitle of the exhibition refers to the large group of pictorial inventions in the field of concrete art, which in turn has points of contact with Minimal Art.

Notation as an independent group of drawn works made its first appearance at the latest with John Cage, who brought together the world of the visual arts and music. Notation can be compared to the jotting down of thoughts, as sketches, which help to prepare a larger project from a thought and visual point of view. In the same way notation is to be understood like the musical score of the composer, which if one has not learned to decipher it, may appear to us as a seemingly harmoniously structured drawing.

The last named term in the exhibition title Structure could refer to a self sufficient immanent artistic generic term. As with the other named groups it finds itself in a state of constant flux and exchange. The mixing of artistic stances and ideas become images which bear witness to the variety of possibilities and point to the difficulty of thinking about or experiencing the works in single categories. In relation and contrast to each other and due to the numerous image references between the single works of the different artists a wide vista opens up, which in spite of difference, forms a unity in seriality and could be seen to indirectly reflect our time from the beginning of modernism.

Part 2: Figuration, Illustration, Notation and Sign

The figurative impulse can be found in the creation of images throughout the history of mankind. The oldest cave paintings and gouged surface scars are allegedly up to 40.000 years old. The immediacy of these drawings and the reduction to simple (even today) recognisable signs e. g. for specific animals and the orchestration of these to a fascinating indivisible whole, still render us speechless and throw us directly back on ourselves, as if we have a common DNA of collective pictorial memory which substantiates our own history.

The drawing can be a direct act of formulation either spontaneously structured or recreated from real seen objects. A direct impulse can manifest itself and materialise through the linear mark. It can also live insistently in a concoction of the thoroughly worked through drawing. In a single example the drawing points more or less precisely to its creator or allows itself to reference experiences from art history; its diversity is inexhaustible.

Figuration and illustration lie close to each other and can depending on the point of view be one and the same. The history of communication in the print medium is also the history of illustration, which has established itself as an independent area. Parallel to this are subdivisions, e. g. in Fashion Illustration and the world of comics. Lifestyle magazines do not use the mix of photography and the artist's hand drawn illustrations in close proximity without good reason. The boundaries between the applied and the fine arts have long been erased. The sign or pictogram in its reduction compresses the experience of reality and makes it readable for everyone. There are also unreadable (but nevertheless tangible) signs, e. g. as a construct of an invented secret language, or in the dense structural visualisation, which comes together to form an abstract structural ornament. Consequently these unreadable signs can also find their place in the first part of the drawing exhibition. Once again we see, as was already formulated at the outset, that the boundaries are porous. The stations and steps on the way to abstraction make available an infinite number of individual intermediate approaches. The figure and the object, the more or less realistic represented landscape in art – here seen in drawing – is to be understood as a substitute for life. The representation of the so called real is manifold, starting with scratched signs in the cave. From the birth of modern man the arc stretches from a seeking after natural verisimilitude in antiquity and the renaissance, up to photographic realism. This ongoing process also encompasses the formulation of the actual essence of nature in baroque times, through to New Objectivity and finds a further echo in contemporary art.

Some artists are represented by different works in both exhibitions. They are witness to the fact that from the concept of a drawing, both poles – the figurative and the abstract – can be harnessed for the artist's own end. The creation of both drawing exhibitions is to be understood as a curatorial undertaking to present and show, the consensus and dissent, the harmony and tension and the diversity existing in the art of drawing today.

It is my wish in bringing these art works together in their different forms that the presentation can be compared to a concert, in which the single tones build to chords, progress to harmonies, expand, become accentuated and are interjected with selective dissonances.

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