

Concrete Contemporary Now is always also a little of yesterday and tomorrow

7.2. - 5.5.2019

MEDIA ORIENTATION
5.2.2019, 11 am

OPENING
6.2.2019, 6 pm

curated by Sabine Schaschl

How does contemporary art deal with the constructivist, concrete and conceptual art of the 20th century? What is its stance on that art's ideas, accomplishments and sometimes utopian projects? Does it merely use its repertoire of forms and colors, or does it also access the concepts behind them?

Taking the question of the extent to which contemporary art production latches onto our art-historical heritage as a starting point, Museum Haus Konstruktiv presents a large-scale group exhibition that has the nature of a statement. Artworks by 34 artists from Switzerland and abroad are to be seen on all four floors. Set out as a route, on which strands from art history are incorporated, combined and extended, *Concrete Contemporary – Now is always also a little of yesterday and tomorrow* offers a multifaceted and lively snapshot of today's constructivist-concrete and conceptual work.

With works by: Sâadane Afif (1970, FR), Otto Berchem (1967, US), Otto Berchem & Amalia Pica (1967, US, and 1978, AR), Andrew Bick (1963, UK), Vanessa Billy (1978, CH), Stefan Burger (1977, DE), Valentin Carron (1977, CH), Chris Cornish (1979, UK), Jose Dávila (1974, MX), Philippe Decrauzat (1974, CH), Svenja Deininger (1974, AT), Lara Favaretto (1973, IT), Fernanda Gomes (1960, BR), Clare Goodwin (1973, UK), Diango Hernández (1970, CU), Herbert Hinteregger (1970, AT), Wyatt Kahn (1983, US), Jan Kiefer (1979, DE), Alicja Kwade (1979, PL), Haroon Mirza (1977, UK), Timo Nasseri (1972, DE), Walid Raad (1967, LB), Renggli (1974, CH), Bernd Ribbeck (1974, DE), Michael Riedel (1972, DE), Karin Schwarzbek (1969, CH), Daniel Steegmann Mangrané (1977, ES), David Martin Soto Climent (1977, MX), Esther Stocker (1974, IT), Katja Strunz (1970, DE), SUPERFLEX (gegründet 1993, DK), Sofie Thorsen (1971, DK), Thomas Vinson (1970, FR), Werner von Mutzenbecher (1937, DE)

The installation piece *COPY RIGHT (White Version)* by Danish group **SUPERFLEX** (Rasmus Nielsen, Jakob Fenger and Bjørnstjerne Christiansen) is placed in the middle of the entrance hall. Displayed on a white platform, 80 white unauthorized replicas of the famous Ant Chair by Arne Jacobsen have been altered in three different ways, to the effect that they resemble the 1951 original more closely. *COPY RIGHT*, produced in 2006, is an intelligent artistic coup and a lucid comment on the intense debates about intellectual property in the 1990s, because the seat elements function as faithful copies and new originals at the same time. This work encourages contemplation of the relationship between art, design and mass-produced goods.

Standing on either side of the army of white chairs, are two palm-like sculptures made from electrical cables, telecommunication cables and fiberglass cables: with *Burst I & Burst II* (2019), Swiss artist **Vanessa Billy** reveals an infrastructure that usually remains hidden from us beneath the ground or behind walls while making our global networking possible, day after day. Although Billy used industrially produced goods to create her eruptive cable palms, her three-part series *Orange Isotopes* (2019) was made by hand, out of natural resin.

Also on the first floor, American artist **Wyatt Kahn** presents three large-format works that emerged from an exploration of painting and its objectness. The MDF boards, divided into parts and reassembled, are covered either by canvas coated with rabbit-skin glue, or by milled lead. Between the individual elements, Kahn leaves gaps, so that the wall becomes part of the composition – be it in the form of a fine line or a separate surface. Two of the works on display are largely identical in terms of their construction, as the piece *Untitled* (2017) directly refers back to *Legger* (2011), but in his latest piece, *Untitled (Blue)* from 2018, Kahn merges the “templates” with a second work.

Svenja Deininger and **Clare Goodwin** have also devoted themselves to painting. On the fourth floor of Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Deininger is represented by four paintings of different sizes; as these are arranged around a corner, they inevitably make a connection with the exhibition space. This Austrian artist’s compositions oscillate between abstraction and implied representation. They are made in a lengthy process involving the application and removal of various paint layers, so each work opens up different perception scenarios that keep floating between surface and background, between the concrete and the vague. Meanwhile, in a mural on the second floor, Goodwin, who was born in Great Britain and lives in Zurich, has implemented one of her 200 unique pieces conceived as designs, which she produced in 2018 as a special edition for Museum Haus Konstruktiv. Identical to the selected original, this mural’s free geometric abstraction also refers to suprematist compositions, although their stringent color concept is broken by this artist, via subtle yellow, salmon and pink hues.

Alongside the heritage of constructivist-concrete art, the stimuli of intellectually akin conceptual art also constitute an important, substantial focal point for our museum work and exhibitions. In Concrete Contemporary, a prominent contemporary conceptual artist is represented: **Michael Riedel**. On the second floor, he presents a three-part body of works entitled *Besuchte und nicht besuchte Ausstellungen (Einladungen 2005–2016)* (Visited and Unvisited Exhibitions [Invitations 2005–2016]). It is based on what was originally a full-wall arrangement of graphics that this German artist had designed for his exhibition projects. Riedel then cut up the resulting complete surface using a grid, without paying any attention to the formats of the individual graphic works, to produce a two-volume publication from it. Smugly displayed on a pedestal, the two volumes are accompanied by the printed sheets that were created during production of the books. These adorn the walls of the exhibition space as wallpaper. Juxtaposed with the original graphic works, Riedel’s installation demonstrates the production-related distortion that translation of artworks into the catalog’s mediation format entails, and it simultaneously performs a mediation function itself, namely as an announcement of pending works.

The *Good Vibe Gongs* (2019) by **David Renggli** of Zurich are another eye-catcher in this exhibition: five round, manually hammered steel plates in different sizes and colors, presented on a pale pink background in the columned hall on the fourth floor. With the title, he makes a tongue-in-cheek reference to the current practice of taking these sounding bodies, which were already known in antiquity, and using them for sound mediation, whereby they are meant to give off positive vibrations when struck. However, his monochromes also evoke various 20th-century painting discourses (such as the form and style of late-1950s hard-edge painting or 1980s neo-geo) and clarify Renggli's strategy of melding themes from popular culture with those from art history.

Another reference to popular culture can be made out in **Lara Favaretto's** piece *Evidently Collapsed* (2013): using only bodyweight, around 400 kilograms of orange-colored confetti have been pressed together to form a 90-cubic-centimeter cube. As the title suggests, this unique piece is ephemeral in nature: just a light draft or slight floor vibration is enough to cause individual fragments of confetti to detach from the cube and for it to eventually fall apart entirely. The material's fragility contrasts with the geometric body's solidity. Favaretto's work can be read as an astute comment on 1960s minimal art, in which industrially produced cubes, cylinders, cuboids and other elementary geometric forms were serially arranged in the space.

In the same room, **Katja Strunz** offers an installation of lacquered metal foldings and wooden wedges extending out across the wall, making just as much reference to Russian constructivism as to American minimal art. This German artist's oeuvre is characterized by not only her constructivist and minimalist reformulations, but also her preoccupation with space, time and history. In the title of this 2002/2018 piece *Zeitraum # 11*, the terms "Zeit" (time), "Raum" (space) and "Traum" (dream) directly flow into each other.

The smaller exhibition space on the fourth floor is occupied by works from German-Iranian artist **Timo Nasseri**, whose creations cause concepts and motifs from eastern and western cultural and art history to meet. He achieves this combination most impressively in the 2016 piece *Florenz-Bagdad* (Florence-Baghdad), a mirror space made of triangular mirror segments, with the potential to be extended indefinitely. Alluding to so-called muqarnas, ornamental honeycomb-like vaults that have embellished many mosques' entrances since the mid-10th century, Nasseri's mirror walls create a complex effect of spatial depth, but simultaneously render it impossible for the observer to see the entirety of their own reflection from any single point in the room. Here, Nasseri playfully interrelates two fundamentally different principles of presentation described by art historian Hans Belting in his book *Florence and Baghdad – Renaissance Art and Arab Science*: the western central perspective, which is bound to the observer, and the Islamic world's suprapersonal view, which is not bound to any standpoint.

Too close for comfort is the title of **Herbert Hinteregger's** project (2011–2019) in the second half of the room. Firstly, this Austrian artist presents a wall installation with an all-over structure comprising numerous affixed ballpoint pen casings, the highly pigmented content of which he has long been using as a painting medium. Secondly, placed on the floor, he displays an oversized wall and floor element that serves here as a carrier for his paintings, which are densely arranged side by side. Close examination of these works, which vary greatly in terms of size and coloring, is made difficult by the unwieldy exhibition display – too close for comfort indeed.

Suspended from the ceiling on nylon threads, the curved acrylic sheets with which the befriended artists **Amalia Pica** and **Otto Berchem** created the installation piece *Mobilize* (2017) resemble pieces of paper swirling through the air. This work, exhibited on the fifth floor, has different levels of meaning for the two artists: It ties in with Pica's preoccupation with errors and delays in communication, and especially the crippling bureaucratic processes in Latin America, but at the same time, it is also a translation of Berchem's video piece *Revolver*, which focused on a means of communication used by social movements in the 20th and 21st centuries – the leaflet.

In a series of historical black-and-white photographs, this artist showed the protest sign as a symbol of civil disobedience, but the specific demands were painted over with color fields.

Artist **Diango Hernández** was born in Cuba and has lived in Germany since 2003. In his large-format paintings *Notas sobre M. Rothko*, *Notas sobre Ellsworth K.* and *Notas sobre Blinky P.*, he devotes himself to three masters of 1960s color-field painting. He has taken his ideas and observations regarding works by Ellsworth Kelly, Mark Rothko and Blinky Palermo, and applied them to the canvas in the form of waves. The wave motif has been an important part of Hernández's vocabulary of forms for several years and has strong links to his homeland: on the one hand, the wave represents Cuba's heaving sea; on the other hand, he uses this form as a visual way of conveying Fidel Castro's meandering speeches. Searching for a language that can be experienced by anyone anywhere, he translates the spoken into a universal form.

Another artist presented here is **Jan Kiefer**, whose work humorously combines the conceptual with the everyday. He has a long-standing interest in old rustic cupboards and their histories. In the exhibition at Museum Haus Konstruktiv, he has placed such a cupboard on a white platform and thus elevated it to the status of sculpture. It simultaneously functions as a display case: the cupboard doors have been replaced with acrylic glass, so the usually concealed interior of the case, the signs of usage by previous owners, become visible. Like so many of the exhibited works, Kiefer's 2017 piece *Käse Kasten* (Cheese Cabinet) demonstrates the intertwining of old and new, of yesterday and today. Just how future generations of artists will extend the resulting strands remains to be seen. At any rate, their potential is far from being exhausted!

This exhibition is accompanied by a catalog with texts by Max Glauner, Adam Jasper, Sabine Schaschl, Sabine Maria Schmidt, Wolfgang Ullrich and Margit Weinberg Staber, as well as reproductions of works, and views of the exhibition.

3 April, 6.30 pm: DISCUSSION ROUND with artists from the exhibition
This event will be held in German and English

Dr. Adam Jasper, Postdoc at the Chair for the History of Art and Architecture within the ETH Zurich Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture, speaks with artists Vanessa Billy, Stefan Burger, Clare Goodwin, Jan Kiefer and Karin Schwarzbek, as well as with Sabine Schaschl, Director of Museum Haus Konstruktiv.

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