

4 × Düsseldorf

16.11.–20.12.2018

The Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, founded in 1773, ranks among the internationally most renowned art academies and already set art-historical standards in the 19th century with the “Düsseldorf school of painting.”

The exhibition 4 × Düsseldorf places the four artists Helmut Dorner, Inge Mahn, Natalie Czech, and Esther Kläs from four different generations of our gallery program in a dialogue with each other. All studied at various times at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and have meanwhile set international standards.

Helmut Dorner, born in 1952 studied under Gerhard Richter at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie and has been Professor for Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe since 1989. In 1992 he has been included at documenta IX in Kassel. His paintings are part of international museum collections such as Centre Pompidou Paris, Museum für Neue Kunst, ZKM Karlsruhe, Museum Winterthur, Switzerland, Arco Fundacion, Madrid, Museum Reina Sofia, Madrid, ES or Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, just to name a few. In Helmut Dorner's (DE 1952) paintings, space and light form a substance supported by dynamism that individually shapes the respective picture body, or saying it with the words of Louis I Kahn: I sense Light as the giver of all presences, and material as spent Light. What is made by Light casts a shadow, and the shadow belongs to Light. I sense a Threshold: Light to Silence, Silence to Light – an ambiance of inspiration, in which the desire to be, to express crosses with the possible.

In Helmut Dorner's paintings, space and light form a substance supported by dynamism that individually shapes the respective picture body. Helmut Dorner's oil and varnish painting can thus be considered as the point of reference that visually surrounds and embeds the “shape” of the real and mental environment. While the pastose surface of his oil paintings refracts and captures the light shining on the picture, the silhouette of the colour substance is at the fore in his varnish paintings. The translucent quality of the picture medium – a flat box made of Plexiglas – casts shadows of Dorner's precisely dripped varnish painting on the wall behind the picture body, thus making it appear in a multidimensional view. Here, paint is grasped not only as material but above all as matter which attains the characteristic of an object through the process of the artist's intentional movements.

Inge Mahn, born in 1943 already participated in the documenta 5 curated by Harald Szeemann 1972, right after her studies with Joseph Beuys in the sixties. Renowned museums have dedicated solo exhibitions to her such as Tranegarden Kopenhagen (1976), Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf (1980), PS 1 New York (1981), Lenbachhaus München (1983). Her sculptures are included in collections such as Hirshorn Museum Washington, Kiasma Helsinki, at Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin, Kunsthalle Helsinki or Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf. In 2017 Inge Mahn presented a solo exhibition at the Kunstverein Braunschweig and at K 21 – Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen.

Inge Mahn's sculptures restate the world of everyday objects as pictorial projections since the 1970s. Her sculptures are based on acute observations of fundamental interpersonal actions and their social context. The materiality of white plaster and the altered scales detach Mahn's motifs from their original functionality. Her works

are subversive “gestalts” communicating to the outside what is tacit, excluded, worrying, and weird. Comedy and tragedy lie close to each other in Mahn’s oeuvre, like in real life. The artist sees her sculptures as “stops” in between; contradictions are not disturbances but complements. In Inge Mahn’s words: “I create an order to understand, or rather: I try to grasp the order that lies behind things. I want to know what the interrelations are and experience orders that I only assume. The orders that contradict our agreements or suspend them, yet that function together with each other.”

Natalie Czech, born 1976 has studied at the Art Academy Düsseldorf under Thomas Ruff. Her works are included in international museum collections such as those of the Pinakothek der Moderne Munich, the Fotomuseum Winterthur, the Museum of Modern Art New York or the Bundeskunstsammlung. Her work became well-known through international solo and group shows at, among others, Palais de Tokyo Paris, Kunsthalle Hamburg or Museum of Modern Art New York.

Natalie Czech’s conceptual photography brings together existing images and texts and places them in a new dialogue with each other. By subtly adapting aspects of Pop and Conceptual Art, she engages in a tongue-in-cheek play with the “power of images” and the “meaning between the lines.”

The works of Poems by Repetition are a continuation of the series she began with in 2013 and now also subtly play with the interpretation of icons, symbols, slogans and existing poems of the 21st and 20th century, which are characterized by the stylistic principle of repetition. On packages and product specifications of electronic goods, album covers and advertising articles, Natalie Czech “finds” poems by Vsevolod Nekrasov, Charles Bernstein or Tom Raworth and makes them “readable” through markings. The methods of photographic reproduction employed by Natalie Czech resemble the rhetorical repetitions used by the poets. Czech translates the specific type of repetition of the respective poem into a number of individual photographs comprising the work. She photographs the source images several times, either with altered details, exposure times or format sizes. The poems made visible by the markings not only relate to the surrounding original text and the product itself, they also enter into a playful, associative dialogue with the originally depicted symbols, icons, and slogans, and their supposed meaning.

Esther Kläs, born in 1981 studied sculpture with Georg Herold at the Kunstakademie at the end of the 2000s. Her works are well known from several international exhibitions at PS1 Museum of Modern Art, New York, Museum Weserburg Bremen, Palais de Tokyo or at Kunsthalle Bielefeld. Her works are part of institutional

collections such as Kolumba Museum Cologne or Sammlung zeitgenössischer Kunst der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.

Starting from a process-oriented working method, Esther Kläs always maintains an intimate physical relationship with her sculptures. The basis is formed by the reference to her own body and the body of the viewer as a vis-à-vis. The boundaries between the “I” and the “other” are blurred here. Esther Kläs’ sculptures follow an autonomously defined logic. Her sculptures are set in relation to episodes of art history, such as minimalism and abstraction, while at the same time authentically are positioned in the here and now of present-day contemporary art. Esther Kläs’ way of using plastic materials such as clay, plaster, or aqua resin mixed with pigments gives rise to an ongoing dialogue between body and environment. Although they are static in sculptural terms, Esther Kläs’ sculptures appear to be in constant motion between object, figure, and space. Despite their abstraction, or perhaps precisely because of it, her sculptures refer to their own presence that enters into a performative relationship with the body of the beholder.

In doing so, Esther Kläs’ works avoid any kind of metaphor or narration in favor of direct experience

Kadel Willborn

Birkenstraße 3
D – 40233 Düsseldorf
www.kadel-willborn.de