

Silvie Aigner
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Order : Disorder

Exhibition in the zs art gallery, Vienna | 30/6 – 30/9/2021

Marie-France Goerens
Viktor Hulík
Jesse Willems

The zs art gallery presents a cross-generational exhibition with three female and male artists who have in common a more or less rigorously conceived constructive language of form as well as the inclusion of artistic parameters such as chance, chaos, order and disorder and a process-oriented way of working.

Marie-France Goerens

The artist, who was born in Luxembourg in 1969 and now lives in Vienna and Luxembourg, has been successfully represented by zs art gallery for several years. Goerens has studied in Vienna at the University of Applied Arts in the class for sculpture and multimedia with Erwin Wurm and in the class of Hans Schabus (transmedia art).

She sees her work as "an interplay between autonomous form and installative and site-specific character. I am always negotiating between good and bad form, perfection and imprecision, realism and abstraction. In doing so, I shift at will from the personal to the collective," says Goerens. The fact that working with space is not only a concern for her but is also something she is comfortable with, was recently impressively demonstrated by her at PARALLEL VIENNA, where she developed an in-situ installation for her solo presentation with zs art gallery. As part of Art Walk 18, she transformed a flat in Vienna's 18th district into an exhibition space.

In addition to installation and performances, she also realises her artistic intentions primarily in the medium of collage. These show a sensitive working with layers of material, whether wallpaper, foils or paper. Often it is discarded things of everyday use that she uses as models or also integrates as fragments of reality into the installations. "Things that have been rejected are given a second chance, so to speak," says Goerens. "In the process of artistic creation, I make an attempt at order by keeping and inserting."

In the current exhibition, she is showing works from the series "Terrain Vague" (Wasteland). In it, she deals with floor plans of vacant flats, flats of acquaintances or from the platform Willhaben. She visited all these flats and made sketches. Subsequently, she cut them up again, tore them up or folded them.

In "Terrain Vague", the former flats become fragments, places of upheaval. The spaces describe an unstable state, a change and a transition. Goerens sees this as a metaphor for human existence and also refers to the mental image of the "inverted ruin" formulated by Robert Smithson. She used old bedsheets and tablecloths as material, which she had taken from an empty flat. "Just like the rooms, they have their stories. Especially in the Corona period, the domestic space became our centre and

retreat," Goerens said. "The works show excerpts, fragments, remnants of these rooms on the one hand in the form of flat reliefs, and on the other hand in the form of wall works and sculptures. Something new emerges from the fragments, feeding on the past and giving rise to a new form."

Jesse Willems

Jesse Willems, born 1984 in Antwerp, Belgium, is rightly considered one of the up & coming artists of the young Belgian art scene. Willems lives in Antwerp and is not only an artist but also a passionate surfer. In 2017, he received the Marc Meulemans Award and has been represented in exhibitions both in Belgium and internationally in recent years.

In his work, he explores both the boundaries and the interfaces between figurative and abstract pictorial conception. His work initially appears formal, concrete, as an interplay of free forms. However, his work is closely linked to the street art and music scene. Thus, for the collage he made for the hip-hop artist Coely, he not only received the Marc Meulemans Award (Best Artwork), but also a nomination for Best Artwork at the Music Industry Awards (MIA's). His tool is scissors, which he uses to cut fragments out of old newspapers, magazines and textbooks. The spectrum of techniques within his artistic practice is wide and includes collage as well as photography.

His great-grandfather left him a collection of 800 old National Geographic magazines. The images they contained, photographs from the late 1940s to the present, were the beginning of his preoccupation with collage and with found image and paper material. Willems searched the images for abstract surfaces and assembled them into geometric compositions. Through his consequent focus on an abstract pictorial language, he succeeds in reducing the chaotic and diverse media imagery and excerpting an extract from it. In this way, new contemporary collages were created from material that is over 70 years old. In addition to old and new magazines, his art books, used paper, some of which has been written on, or old plans are also source materials.

In the zs art gallery, for example, he shows a series of collages in which he uses pages of text from the Catechism, whose instruction in Christian matters of faith, however, also contains misogynistic passages. By reversing the texts and working with the blank back pages, Willems eliminates the reactionary content. The action thus not only brings to light the formal, tactile quality of the paper, but is also a deliberate act. Also striking are the rich colours of the dark blue and red carbon papers, which used to be used as so-called "carbon copy paper" to make carbon copies and are now impressively staged by Willems.

In addition, his city walks with his camera are an important source of inspiration for the artist. Willems works with photography in a similar way to his collages. He is on the move in urban spaces with his camera, always in search of fragments of everyday life that are often overlooked. By enlarging them, he brings them into focus. His early collages and photographs can still be described as more figurative and overloaded with objects. The orientation towards a search for the abstract qualities in the things of everyday life and thus a turning point towards a reductive pictorial structure resulted from his first solo exhibition. His paintings became smaller and calmer; soft colours, purity, tranquillity dominate. The elements were given more space on the page. Willems consequently eliminated all unnecessary cut-outs. What remains are the few fragments that are worth remembering. The search for abstract compositions and the structuring of reality are also a means of coping with the chaos and stress of our world, says Willems.

Viktor Hulík

For the first time, zs art gallery is showing works by Viktor Hulík on a larger scale. But the artist, born in Bratislava in 1949, is no stranger in Austria; he was represented with works in Peter Lindner's Vienna gallery and at Gallery Leonhard in Graz, among others. Hulík studied in Bratislava and lives and works there. His extensive international exhibition activity, however, makes him a "global player", as the collector and art theorist Jürgen Weichardt once described him. Hulík joined the international artist group INT-ART in the 1980s, and in 1990 he received a one-year scholarship from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation in New York. Further stays abroad followed.

In addition to his artistic activities, Viktor Hulík is an advocate of the presence of contemporary Slovak art. He organised the exhibition "Sculpture and Object" on squares and in galleries in Bratislava with great success, was chairman of the Professional Artists' Association of the Slovak Republic from 1993 to 1995 and founded the Gallery Z in the centre of Bratislava in 1997, which he still runs today - despite all the ups and downs. For, according to Hulík, the gallery is not commercially oriented but intended as a presentation platform.

His work is committed to the constructive language of form that he consistently developed, also with the help of the computer and special software. Dynamics and movement were central elements from the beginning - from the early "unfolding" landscapes to the mobile wall objects now shown in the exhibition. This also characterises the currently presented works, which can be moved and thus changed by the viewers. From the ordered composition initially given by the artist, which is determined by rule, row, grid and repetition, a wealth of possibilities for variation of the picture or picture object emerges. The artist thus enables the viewer to intervene in the artistic process. The conventional aesthetic consumability of the work of art is interrupted by active participation. Precise elaboration of the works counteracts the intentional principle of chance and the desire to work playfully with forms, colour surfaces and lines. Thereby, he works with the reduction to black and white as well as with brightly coloured surfaces.

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