

HOPSTREET

Burning Colours

Veronica Brovall, Christof Mascher, Norbert Prangenberg, Monique van Genderen, Claudia Wieser.

Ceramics is the suppositious child of the visual arts and it is often 'banished' to the domain of applied arts. That an artist like Thomas Schütte likes to use ceramics was not considered decisive, but all that changed recently. Museums, art centres and galleries offer more and more ceramic works, figurative or abstract, as dishes, with a refined structure or lumpy, colourfully glazed, in solid colours or unglazed.

As gallery owners, we see lots of ateliers and over the last few years we have noticed that many young artists produce ceramic works in addition to their sculptures or paintings. By doing so, they follow in the footprints of more illustrious artists like Tony Cragg, Rosemarie Trockel or Ai Wei Wei. Since 'ceramic mania' is spreading amongst the younger generation, we feel it is our task to realise a ceramics project. Over the past year we came into contact with the ceramic works of three young artists: Claudia Wieser, Veronica Brovall and Christof Mascher. Each of them uses the medium in their own way, and we find this extremely fascinating. The exhibition in Hopstreet is supplemented with works by Monique van Genderen and Norbert Prangenberg. Norbert has been creating ceramic works for some time now. In line with this exhibition, Hopstreet Gallery will be organising a solo presentation of Veronica Brovall's work later this year.

Veronica Brovall (°1975 in Falun, Zweden, lives and works in Berlin) associates ceramics with bourgeois interiors, lounge decorations, kitsch, 'bad' taste, and the working class. Think of Delft pottery, Hummel figurines and Meissen porcelain.

"In my earlier work I often made large-scale quite trashy and brutal sculptures and put them inside the home. I see my ceramics as connected to the earlier works dealing with the home ,(and a majority of them are developed from buckets and bowls) but the ceramics function more like Trojan horses, objects that doesn't clash with the interior, but disguises itself as interior decoration objects. The ceramic material in fact enabled me to go very far in a sort of anti-esthetical, raw, non correct, anti decorative direction, because in the process I found that the material itself demanded such an attack in order for it to feel like my work. In my work I have always strived for directness, violence and absurdity."

Christof Mascher (°1979 in Hanover, lives in Braunschweig).

This new body of work sees Mascher supplement his paper porcelain reliefs with ceramic sculptures, all articulating a development within his pictorial language and storytelling.

Mascher's works can be seen to continue a dialogue with northern European painting through his own individual mythology – set out across his various landscapes and scenarios. Depictions of allegory, the surreal, hybrid creations and characters, and the anthropomorphic awakening of the natural world – can all be traced to a legacy of artists that began with *Bruegel* and *Bosch*. Yet his images reveal a thoroughly unique way of gathering and disseminating visual information, providing an insight into how he controls and compartmentalises ideas, signifiers and motifs in his work.

Interested in how imagination allows the surreal to emerge into life, such creations are integrated into his images on horizontal layers that sweep through his paintings. This stage-setting is crucial – allowing Mascher to easily engage with the objects or characters he is inserting onto the picture plane. From this comes a desire to control and harness such forms –

giving him the opportunity to expand his practice across different media. While working with ceramics is in effect a new mode of drawing for Mascher, the freedom gained from reflecting back on his own intuitive processes – is best captured in his series of display cabinets. Christof Mascher realised a new installation for Hopstreet - a cabinet consisting of diverse elements including paintings on clay tablets, busts, ...

For **Norbert Prangenberg** (°1949 in Rommerskirchen-Nettesheim, D) ceramic sculpture, which he has been engaged with since the 1980's, co-exists with his paintings and drawings, creating a corpus whose parts remain autonomous.

If the contours of the earlier works are generally regular, the forms of the new sculptures tend to be less defined with rougher surfaces. Whether they are all one colour (white, cream or brown) ornated or spattered with the colours of paint, these pieces neither aspire to an extreme precision nor try to mask the process of their fabrication. The faïence pieces however (fired earthenware covered with an opaque glaze) allow the artist to paint with mastery over the form, which cannot be done with any other ceramic techniques. The various steps of shaping, embellishing and glazing of these monolithic sculptures, which are at times perforated, or made up of mounting coils, are all done before the firing. One might think of imaginary archaeological vestiges, where the sculptures are similar to a hybrid organism in which parasites are incorporated and develop: little modelled waves, fragments of faïence or flowers in the shape of trumpets. Norbert Prangenberg deliberately entitles his sculptures "Figure" thus confirming their analogy to nature.

Monique van Genderen (°1965 in Vancouver, British Columbia, and lives in Los Angeles) creates large-scale wall paintings that make use of adhesive vinyl with various reflective, translucent, and matte finishes. Solid architectural surfaces are transformed into changeable spaces through the play of light on the materials, which shift, disappear, and reappear as one passes by. Inspired by the tradition of abstract painting as well as contemporary graphic design and computer generated patterns, van Genderen's work challenges the expectations of painting.

On view is a series of smaller clay paintings in which van Genderen uses fired clay and glaze to make lyrical abstractions. Van Genderen's work has always presented materials in the form of a narrative; vinyl stood in for paint, enamel for watercolor, and now clay for canvas. Throughout all the works there is a mixture of materials varying between the organic (raw pigments) and the industrial (shiny enamels). The surface of the clay paintings on view has an imprint of canvas, which makes one think they were made on canvas.

Claudia Wieser (°1973 in Freilassing, lives and works in Berlin) goes for pre-shaped ceramics – besides, drawings and wallpapers, she constructs wall installations and, most recently, sculptural works with tiles, glazed by herself. The strict geometrical form of the tiles is essential for the lucidity of the works which refer to modernist ideas and shapes. Claudia Wieser transfers circles, triangles and cones from her drawings on paper onto the shiny surface of glazed ceramics, thus exploring the relation between colour, form and material. The seam between the tiles is an essential element of these 'drawings' on tiles, even more in her recent tile sculptures which are less colourful.