
IMI KNOEBEL

DAS UND DAS

SALZBURG VILLA KAST

25 Jan 2013 - 16 Mar 2013



Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac Salzburg is holding a solo exhibition with new works by Imi Knoebel (b 1940), probably the internationally best-known German abstract artist. No complete series will be shown, but key works from various current groups of works will enter into dialogue.

For the first time, a work from his latest series of *Garden pictures* will be presented – a multi-part work in which the painted aluminium elements look almost like weightless *papier collé* and have the effect of a structural variant of Henri Matisse's late collages. There are also works from Knoebel's series of stylised house forms. The two-part works each consist of a square or a rectangle and a trapezium. Adjacent to the top of the larger rectangular areas, which are in different shades of white, is a much smaller trapezium painted red or black.

Further works on display are from the *Cut-ups* series, the *Colourfield paintings* cut into strips and reassembled into a new logical entity, the *Potato pictures*, oval forms, profiles, triangles and rectangles overlapping freely and irregularly, and works from the series of small-format paintings entitled *Anima mundi*, alluding to the ancient concept of the *world soul*. The voluminous sculpture *Place – Menninge* (2012) completes the ensemble of works.

Klaus Wolf Knoebel spent his childhood near Dresden, and moved with his family to Mainz in 1950. 1962-64, he attended the Darmstadt School of Arts and Crafts, and together with Rainer Giese studied constructional and structural composition, in a course based on the ideas of the pre-Bauhaus course taught by Johannes Itten and László Moholy-Nagy. Fascinated by the charismatic teaching of Joseph Beuys, the two students – who adopted the same first name, Imi – transferred to the Düsseldorf Academy of Art (1964-71).

In 1968, Knoebel created his first installation, *Raum 19*, with a variety of geometric objects – at a physical distance from and outward contrast to Beuys. Similarly to his fellow-student Blinky Palermo, with whom he collaborated during the late 1960s and early '70s, he used analytical series to make a study of the relationship between space, picture support and colour. Reduction to the elementary co-ordinates of painting is the mark of Knoebel's great predecessor, Kasimir Malevich. "The most valuable things in the creative work of painting are colouration and surface structure. They are the essence of painting, but this essence has always been overpowered by the subject", Malevich asserted at the beginning of the 20th century.

After purist line pictures, light projections and white canvases (1972-75) Knoebel first used colour in 1974, and from 1975 progressed to overlapping coloured rectangles painted with Menninge (an industrial rustproof paint), and later to brightly-coloured, gesturally expressive colour combinations on laminated plywood and metal plates set in a specific spatial relation.

"Poetry of precision is a description of the presence throughout the work of rationality and irrationality, of calculation and intuition, of reason and emotion, a description of a technical objectivity that establishes the work, without any artful tricks, in a vital field of tension between materiality and spirituality" (Max Wechsler, 2002). The synchronicity of constructional precision and painterly freedom is a fundamental characteristic of Knoebel's latest aluminium works.

Besides museum exhibitions including Düsseldorf (1975), Winterthur and Bonn (1983) and Hamburg (1992), Knoebel was also represented at documentas 5, 6 and 7. In 1996 the Haus der Kunst in Munich held a major retrospective of his work, and in 2002 the distinguished Kestner Gesellschaft in Hanover celebrated its 75th anniversary with a presentation of Knoebel's recent works. In 2008, the Dia Art Foundation Beacon (NY) mounted a comprehensive permanent presentation of the legendary block of works *24 Farben – für Blinky* (1977), and in 2009 the New National Gallery showed an arrangement of monumental key works relating to the upper hall of the famous Mies van der Rohe building, as well as gestural painting in different shades of white, which used as the painting ground the glass panes surrounding the upper storey of the building. Parallel with this exhibition, the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin showed works from the collection of the Deutsche Bank and new works. Under the title *ICH NICHT*, they gave a decisive answer to Barnett Newman's question *Who's afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue?* Most recently, the Leipzig Museum of Fine Arts devoted a solo exhibition to Imi Knoebel's works (2011).

Knoebel's monumental church windows for Reims Cathedral were consecrated in June 2011. They constitute a highly symbolic work, in the place where Adenauer and de Gaulle made the breakthrough to German-French reconciliation in 1962.