

GERWALD ROCKENSCHAUB

IF I EVER HAD THE CHANCE AGAIN, I'D PROBABLY DO THE SAME

SALZBURG VILLA KAST

01 Saturday - 14 Saturday



Following Gerwald Rockenschaub's major retrospective, held in Wolfsburg Kunstmuseum April - September 2011, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac now presents a comprehensive exhibition of new works by the artist. After his room-specific installations at the last documenta in Kassel (2007) and his simple but effective design for the exterior of the temporary Kunsthalle ["art hall"] on the Berlin Schlossplatz, Wolfsburg was his third major project within only a few years. Here, at an angle in the monumental interior, he erected a wall 70m long and 11m high, the front of which he filled completely with hundreds of different pictographic motifs. For the viewer, this resulted in a deliberate sensory overload – a telling comment on our everyday world, inundated as it is with advertising and visual stimuli.

In our Salzburg exhibition, Rockenschaub is showing new works created in 2011, from the two series *Pralinen* [chocolates] and *Intarsien* [marquetry], a series of sculptures and some wall objects made in the process of his work on the Wolfsburg exhibition. The *Pralinen* are a series of small-scale, painted, cuboid wooden objects, which in their setting are reminiscent of the design of luxury confectionery. The *Intarsien*, also of wood, are based on the type of inlaid work that flourished during the Italian Renaissance. Different varieties of wood veneer are laid on a flat surface to form patterns of varying colours and structures. The geometric aesthetic of Rockenschaub's sculptures shows the design process using the CAD program *Vectorworks*, popular amongst Apple users, while at the same time they are strongly reminiscent of models of Russian constructivist architectural fantasies. The wall objects are based on motifs from the Wolfsburg show but, unlike that wall, here the icons are transferred from foil applications into the higher-value medium of milled and painted wood objects about 5 cm. in depth. These works, somewhere between hard-edge aesthetic and DIY romanticism, are typical of Rockenschaub's ideology-free fluctuation between "high" and popular culture.

The work of the Austrian artist Gerwald Rockenschaub (*b* 1952) has been associated with the term "neo-geo" since the early 1980s, which saw the formation of a group of young artists who used the formal vocabulary of the abstract avant-garde. Neo-geo permeated the aesthetic of American minimal art with the consumeristic attitude of pop art. Rockenschaub's work cannot, however, be categorised simply as a specific style. In his animations, in the *Pralinen* and *Intarsien* – which draw on classic panel painting –, in the wall objects, sculptures and room-specific installations, he relates in equal measure to ideas and positions of the modern age and to phenomena of everyday culture. In an act of radical reduction and concentration (the two basic principles of Rockenschaub's method) these are reduced to their essential element.

Rockenschaub's pictures are no longer based on the social or metaphysical utopias found in the pioneers of abstraction, but on abstract codes and patterns from the everyday world. Rockenschaub undermines the "characterisation" of the picture by deliberately withdrawing everything that might constitute individuality in a painting. Linear structures, individual geometric forms and colour fields suggest a narrative level, which the viewer has to draw on his own store of images to decipher. The aesthetic system of the Bauhaus, Kandinsky's abstract cosmos and the artistic concepts of pop art all show their influence, in roughly equal measure. One of the most outstanding characteristics of Rockenschaub's method is his advanced concept of production, with regard to the use and appropriation of modern technologies. He is one of the first artists to make use of a formal vocabulary which includes computer-generated graphics. Moreover, Rockenschaub has for years been an internationally respected DJ in the field of electronic music. This is reflected in the technoid aesthetic of his work, as well as in the title of our current exhibition: If ever had the chance again, I'd probably do the same is a quotation from the song Never, Never (2011) by the British dubstep group SBTRKT.