

Foreword

The City of Offenburg is situated in the cultural landscape of the Upper Rhine, which is rich in tradition and enjoys a lively presence in the current art scene. Due to its geographical location and its history, our city is especially called upon to contribute to the effort of inner-European unification with its policy of art. The Förderkreis Kunst + Kultur (Support Association Art + Culture), as initiator, and the City of Offenburg seek to become active in this regard and have agreed to award the Oberrheinischer Kunstpreis Offenburg (Upper Rhine Art Prize Offenburg) for the first time in 2011. The prize will be awarded every three years to artists from Germany, France and Switzerland for outstanding achievements. It includes the prize money, a catalogue and an exhibition at the Städtische Galerie Offenburg.

Corinne Wasmuht, this year's award-winner, is a painter living and working in Berlin and Karlsruhe, where she has been teaching as a professor at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste since 2006. The artist, who was born in Germany in 1964 and grew up in Argentina, studied at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. According to the jury: "Her for the most part largeformat paintings open up new dimensions of perception and captivate the viewer in a magical way. Her multi-faceted works show momentary fragments of our urban and regional environment. (...) What manifests itself in the abundance of information is a clear reference to the excessive media world we are exposed to. With a large amount of concentration and supreme painterly ease, Corinne Wasmuht succeeds in taming this omnipresent flood of images. While at first sight the image spaces appear to dissolve, they join together when taking a closer look to form a new and fascinating picture of the world."

I warmly congratulate Corinne Wasmuht to the Oberrheinischer Kunstpreis! We owe the selection of the award-winner to the expert jury chaired by Prof. Dr. Klaus Gallwitz and its members, Dr. Martin Engler, Dr. Ulrike Lorenz, Petra von Olschowski, and Prof. Dr. Bernhard Serexhe.

It is a matter of concern for the partners, the Förderkreis and the City of Offenburg, to document the work of the artist and the event, the Oberrheinischer Kunstpreis 2011, in a highquality publication. The catalogue, for which Klaus Gallwitz has written a text, places the main emphasis on the artist's collages, thus publishing for the very first time a special facet of Corinne Wasmuht's artistic work. The tri-national aspect of our ambitious endeavour, the Oberrheinischer Kunstpreis, is also expressed by the fact that the texts can also be read in French.

I am very happy about the joint project with the Förderkreis Kunst + Kultur. It is a successful partnership that has been accompanied in a highly committed way by Georg Fröhner, the chairman of the association. He was at all times an important contact for the managing director of the Oberrheinischer Kunstpreis Offenburg, Dr. Gerlinde Brandenburger-Eisele.

I extend my thanks to all persons involved for their efforts, and wish that the exhibition meets the response it deserves!

Edith Schreiner

Governing Mayor of the City of Offenburg

Klaus Gallwitz:

The Transformation of Images

Before putting them back together again, the pictures must be cut up. It is a matter of transformation. On a daily basis, Corinne Wasmuht collected any photos and depictions in newspapers and magazines, on labels and packages that attracted her attention in cardboard boxes and by and by made collages out of them. She cut to pieces our overflowing world of public images, underhand and just as it suited her. Pleasurable destruction creates the required distance. It makes it much easier to set one's own mental images in motion and transfer them to painting's complex set of rules with oil colours on large wooden panels in a time-consuming painting

process. Corinne Wasmuht calls this transformation.

As a 22-year-old art student, she started building up her picture archive, sheet by sheet on DIN A4 paper often already used for other purposes, for a period of almost fifteen years. She cut up the originals, sorted the motifs, snipped away at them, then placed and pasted the pieces in the arrangements she chose. It was fun, like experimenting with watercolours. At times she also included photos of her own. A preliminary test. It did not yet possess the seriousness and tension of painting on large surfaces.

Between 1986 and 1999, files were filled with collages dealing with themes such as water, plants and clouds, with subcategories such as waves and water drops, deserts and grains of sand, lights, but also atom and neutron models, astronauts, scenes of violence, fires and explosions, and many others. There are around 1,500 incomplete and 700 completed collages, by and by rounded off with fitting motifs, in the beginning all done by hand, until she received her first laptop: "Since then, I'm actually only sitting at the computer when I'm not painting. Some time, I would like to make collages out of my boxes filled with snippets of the past twelve years." The fast-paced digital technique of montage replaced scissors, brush and paint pot, the symbols of which can today still be found in every photo application. At a production rate of around two or three large-format pictures a year, however, it is clear to the painter that the placement of these works necessitates a completely different organisation of artistic procedures.

On the one hand, Corinne Wasmuht's extensive picture archive resembles undated diaries, like the ones earlier artists had with them as *carnets*; on the other hand, it is much more like a sorted material collection drawing from our general public perception. We experience that "the fastest and most meaningless images of the world" are transformed "in the slowest and most meaningful way."¹ She has taken almost all pictures from the mass media and deliberately cut them up, to then substitute them in a tenacious and prolonged painting process with her large paintings that convey nothing other than a comprehensive picture of her perception of the world as it can be found in the fragments she collected. The trivial mirror images of our one-dimensional media reality must therefore be transformed in order to replace them with one's own images, resulting in an expansive synopsis with which every viewer is confronted. The most various viewing levels now overlap and permeate each other, while in the case of the collages it was still about levels after and behind each other. In her panoramic paintings, Corinne Wasmuht seeks to visualise the "state of incorporating" public images². That's her central motif: the incorporation of the opposites of speed and standstill in the process of painting.

Corinne Wasmuht has been awarded the first Oberrheinischer Kunstpreis (Upper Rhine Art Prize) for these pictures produced in a long working process. Two central pieces of the past years, the paintings *Ezeiza Bandog* (2004) from the Frieder Burda Collection in Baden-Baden and the new *Uqbar I* (2011) from the studio of the artist, form the dominating counterpoints of the exhibition in the way they are pointedly juxtaposed – the calm and the restless pole. They are flanked by the collages, a swarming, variegated group, of which the largest possible number is on view here for the first time as an independent work complex, challenging the viewer to explore the inner and outer spaces of Corinne Wasmuht's cosmos.

From the decision of the Oberrheinischer Kunstpreis Offenburg jury

Corinne Wasmuht's for the most part large-format paintings open up new dimensions of perception and captivate the viewer in a magical way. In numerous facets, the works show momentary fragments of our urban and regional environment, with many perspectives connecting to a flow of simultaneous perceptions. Our reality remains recognisable in the details, while on the whole fantastic and strange spaces emerge, in which individual scenes appear to hover like dream sequences. Architecture, space and body tend to have a life of their own, connected only by a subtle painterly composition. The paintings of Corinne Wasmuht are full of contradictions, they are abstract and figurative, plane and three-dimensional. Her panoramic pictures with diverse projections and perspectival distortions lead the viewer into a mysterious hall of mirrors. In the overwhelming richness of information, a clear reference to our profuse media world

manifests itself. With concentration and supreme painterly ease, Corinne Wasmuht tames this omnipresent flood of images. While at first sight the images space seem to dissolve, when taking a closer look they join together to form a new and fascinating picture of the world.