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Kurt-Schumacher-Str. 2 60311 FRANKFURT am MAIN

MARKUS EBNER

Günther Förg

September 6 – November 3, 2019

Markus Ebner's new work briefly and laconically bears the name of the artist Günther Förg in the title. The subject of this series of five photographs so far is a half relief, which shows a central element of Förg's grave in Freiburg. When the artist died on December 5, 2013, the artist's family used a drawing that Förg left in a sketchbook just prior to his decease as the origin for the casting of this sculpture.¹

In various camera settings Markus Ebner approaches the monochrome plate of light grey lead, entwined and partly overgrown with green ivy, as if he were searching for the one valid perspective. The plate is additionally structured by pebble-sized, bulge-like bulges. The strict image detail, the concentrated and insistent view of the lead plate, the slight variations of the photographs and their serial play, not least the matt color prints, whose format of 99 x 66 cm approximately corresponds to the original size of the lead plate, all these precise artistic settings transcend the anecdotic of a visit to the site and transform the photographic reproductions of the half relief into abstract images.

In a way, Ebner's series is dedicated to Günther Förg's last "representation"; it is to be understood both as an act and a gesture, as well as a pictorial-sculptural reflection, an involvement with the legacy of one of the most influential German artists of his generation, who in his work, like hardly anyone else, has appropriated the great Constructivist legacy of Modernism. Whether it is the large-format photographs of modernist architecture in Germany and Italy, the Soviet Union and Israel, the flat monochrome paintings of his early works, or the two-part or multi-part "Stripes", his works always appear as playful and casual as well as formally dominated appropriations of the canon of forms of the great avant-gardes of the 20th century. They identify his work as an act of appropriation, but also as a continuation of modernism.

Turning back to Ebner's photographic series, one might ask the question of the reason for the serial moment and the insistent view of the series. As if the repetition of photographs would allow one to guess what the model could have been for the shapes on the surface of the slab, which on the one hand remind one of pebbles, but also of washed-out Hebrew characters of Jewish gravestones or even of a mysterious Braille writing; but their organic and disorderly setting does not seem to permit any reading anyway. Even if they had an order or logic, it would be impossible for photography to transfer the three-dimensional half relief into the two-dimensional surface of the photograph - a flatness that Förg himself tried to structure so intensively with

¹ Blau, Ein Kunstmagazin Nr. 4, Sept. 2015, p. 43

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the recurring depiction of modernist architecture, and which always seemed to have a form of failure in Förg's negligent, partly blurred shooting style and in the use of grainy film material.

Only at second glance does the viewer become aware that Ebner's photographs were taken on different days and that a little time must have passed between them, that the ivy has grown, that the strictness of the juxtaposition of monochrome grey surface and green stripe has given way to a more organic ensemble, that ultimately the appearance or expression of the plate itself can only ever be an ever-changing and different one from day to the next, that Förg's last representation is thus entirely left to time.

Last but not least, Markus Ebner's new work is a continuation of his photographic series of "Grave pictures", which he dedicated in 1999 to the resting place of Marcel Duchamp, the artist who declared painting dead and revolutionized the art of the 20th century. But even the great radical gestures of art have their finiteness and historicity.

In his painting - such as the appropriations of the paintings of his teacher Günther Fruhtrunk - Ebner also undertakes a similar form of repetition: beyond the simple homage, he understands his work of the precise copy of Fruhtrunk's paintings as a form of radical appropriation, or rather of dealing with them: through the concentrated deconstruction (and reconstruction) of their pictorial genesis and form, he does everything to let the spirit and quality of this art re-appear in the surface of the new, now henceforth his paintings.

Without understanding these as religious in a proper sense, Ebner's paintings and photographic works always deal with the end and survival.

Text by Florian Ebner, CP, Paris

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Upcoming Art Fairs

FIAC Paris
October 16 – 20, 2019
Booth H09

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NADA Miami
December 5 – 8, 2019