

JACKY STRENZ

Galerie

MARKUS EBNER

Documenta 4, 1968, Part 1

February 4 – March 25, 2012

Documenta's fourth edition expanded the audience's notion of art in a twofold way. Apart from the unusually large formats of American painting and the notoriously bold imagery of pop art it was the dynamism of action painting that shifted the focus from the finished product towards the process of its formation.

Although Guenter Fruhtrunk's contribution to the so called "documenta schwarz a" seemed like a downright rejection of his transatlantic colleagues' unruly, yet market-conform monumentality, the presentation of his meticulous images resulted in a further increase of his publicity.

In the shape of an installation, consisting of three reconstructed paintings along with coloured serigraphs, based on Fruhtrunk's exhibits, Markus Ebner restages that seminal show.

Contrary to the initial presentation in 1968, which was deliberately careless for economic as well as ideological reasons, Ebner arranges the paintings and prints in pairs in order to throw their underlying correspondences into relief.

Since Duchamp made it clear that a work of art is completed only by way of the audience's perception, reception and production have become equally creative procedures. This process is made obvious within appropriation art, where the mentally comprehended piece is signed by the person who had performed this creative reflection. As opposed to merely intellectual apprehension, Ebner, being a painter, is capable of visualizing his understanding by means of color and shape.

Yet despite these references to art-historically established methods of reconstruction and adoption, Ebner differs from those purely reiterating, resp. appropriating strategies in terms of two crucial aspects.

Highlighted by his signature, the evidence of the changed authorship touches on the still topical issue of The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. The nowadays ubiquitous plagiarism of intellectual property makes it all the more necessary to distinguish between first and second images. However the development of the requisite discriminatory power is impeded by rather superficial ways of perception we adopted in order to cope with the multitude of visual material and the speed of its accretion.

Moreover Ebner focuses on a body of work which – despite of being a canonical part of German post-war painting – doesn't necessarily enjoy the recall value of the generally mainstream material employed by appropriation artists.

Choosing instead the work of a strict formalist cuts across recent notions of concrete painting as just another modernist style and hence of merely art-historical interest. Of course this renunciation of the belief in progress still prevalent in the art market today, in favor of a revision of the already discarded, has been an essential feature of postmodern practices. Yet unlike postmodernism's eclectic dis- and re-assembling of quotations, Ebner confines himself to one single artist's work without any arbitrary modifications, carrying it forward from the year of the fourth to that of the thirteenth documenta.

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His whole procedure as well as its outcome scrutinizes the conventionalized notion of art making and artist.

„Documenta 4, 1968, Part 1“ comprises Ebner’s reconstruction of Fruhtrunk’s paintings *Mit Roten Randzonen*, *Progression Gelb-Blau-Schwarz* and *Cantus Firmus*, in combination with colored serigraphs from 1968 which are part of a portfolio by Verlag der Spiegel, Cologne. „Documenta 4, 1968, Part 2“, the second part of the exhibition is completed with the reconstruction of the two remaining documenta works *Vibration grün blau schwarz* and *Violette Interferenzen im Rot*.

Text: Charlotte Lindenberg

Upcoming

MARKUS EBNER

Documenta 4, 1968, Part 2

May 26 – June 15, 2012

Opening Reception

Saturday, May 26, 1-4 pm