

Florian Pumhösl

“Diminution”

30 April 2010 – 26 June 2010

opening reception on Friday, 30 April, 4-9 pm

In his third solo exhibition at the Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Florian Pumhösl (1971, lives in Vienna) is showing an extensive series of pictures under the overall conceptual heading of ‘diminution’, in which he continues his work on picture contents and genres of abstract visual language. In contrast to strategies of historical reference or questions of appropriation, Pumhösl operates within a very explicit historical system of standards in which existing concepts are brought into contact with one another and at the same time made to contradict each other. The series of works being shown here conforms in its formal language and material characteristics to a specifically 20th century redefinition of the single picture as an aspect of reproductive logic and serial ordering, or as the notation of a subjective or objective event. Carrying on from this definition of the pictorial object, the unframed sheets of glass, all in the same format, are hung directly in front of the gallery wall so that the gaps between the pictures give the room its spatial rhythm.

The title ‘diminution’ is borrowed from musical composition theory where it designates the repetition and diminution of a motif. The introduction of ‘diminution’, or reduction as a compositional principle, into the history of painting, serves to demonstrate that the abstract portrait is a possibility by continuing to propose the contention that it is still feasible in the final estimate to make an individual or group portrait.*

In Florian Pumhösl’s adaptation this contention is adopted as a concept, although what concerns him is not so much the portrait as a category or any attempt to legitimize that category or innovate within it, but rather an approach to the ‘hazardous business’ of translation and the affective element involved in such translations. Each of the groups of 2 to 6 units, abstract under-glass paintings, are identical in format.** They are executed in acrylic lacquer and consist of simple arrangements of black curves and lines. These are mostly organized round a slightly tilted central axis which Florian Pumhösl understands as both a basic disposition in the logic of distribution, that is of a ‘presentation’ or as an angle of view of the constellation. Within the groups the painted configurations undergo variations or are developed back, this being done without applying any formal or mathematical logic, but rather with a general tendency to diminution, to a reduction in the size of the reproduction in which the abstraction seems to be more a means of transcription. This tendency can be read as intentionally unsystematic – both with regard to the materials and spatial qualities, and also to the understanding of history and the picture as quasi-economies.

Florian Pumhösl participated with his installation ‘Modernology’ at Documenta 12 in 2007 and also in the exhibition ‘Modernologies’ in the Museu d’Art Contemporani in Barcelona (MACBA). Currently a solo exhibition of the artist takes place at the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen in Düsseldorf (until 24 May).

* As an example one might cite among others Bart van Leck’s formalistic portraits, Hans Richter’s Dada heads, or Marius de Zaya’s abstract caricatures, as well as Constantin Brancusi’s famous portrait of James Joyce.

** The vertical rectangle in the classical conventions of painting is the portrait format.