

Isa Genzken
"Early Works"

8 March – 20 April 2013
opening reception on Friday, 8 March 2013, 7-9 pm

We are delighted to announce Isa Genzken "Early Works", the artist's tenth solo exhibition at our gallery. The exhibition also marks the 25th anniversary of Isa Genzken's collaboration with Galerie Buchholz. On this occasion the artist is showing an installation with specially selected important early works most of which have never been shown before in the context of an exhibition.

"The form develops out of the fact that each of the five colours touches each of the other colours" is the title of a 120-part series of gouaches from 1973 by Isa Genzken. In this series, following the permutation principle and corresponding to the title, Isa Genzken declines configurations of nine squares in different greys so, that each of these differing grey fields touches each of the others. If this work is still related to the formal vocabulary of minimal art just as the presentation of the series of gouaches, (clipped into files) is related to conceptual art, Isa Genzken's next large series of drawings, "Parallelograms" (112 and 60 parts) from 1975 seems to be conceived more according to the formal inventions of Russian Constructivism and the diagrams and spatial constructs of architects and engineers. The linear design of the "Parallelograms" for the first time shows a narrow, elongated horizontal form which Isa Genzken will in the years that follow develop into her unique ellipsoid and hyperbolo sculptures. The ellipsoid, horizontal circle forms stretched to the extreme, consists of two almost straightened and seemingly parallel lines which, however, at their ends are still connected and are thus closed forms. The hyperbolos are spatial versions of two lines that run parallel but at their ends diverge and are thus open forms.

The sculptures "Untitled", 1974 and "Ellipse no 1", 1976 which we are showing here are Isa Genzken's first sculptural execution of the formal principle of the ellipsoid. Isa Genzken had decided to present these sculptures not horizontally but vertically leaning against the wall or hanging. In 1976 Isa Genzken began a collaboration with a physicist and a mathematician at the University of Cologne who developed a computer program for the spatial conversion of the forms of the ellipsoid and the hyperbolo for the production of her sculptures. For our exhibition Isa Genzken has converted the idea of these in the beginning still very reduced structural drawings to the dimensions of our gallery. According to the computer program from 1976 we are showing plotter-drawings of a closed ellipsoid, and also 2 halves and 4 quarters of the form of the ellipsoid. We are also showing plotter-drawings in the original size of the double ellipsoid "Zwillinge" (Twins), a two-part sculpture from 1982 that is very important to the artist.

Since the very beginning of her work until the present, photography has been an important component of Isa Genzken's artistic practice. Her project for the artist book "Berlin 1973", is conceived by Isa Genzken as her first artistic work relevant to her practice. The book consists of 78 b/w photographs in which the artist takes pictures of street vistas and architecture in Berlin. This is a comprehensive photographic survey in which Isa Genzken above all directs her attention to the trappings of an architectural modernism that was typical of the day which suddenly gleam, strange and frozen, out of the gloomy street vistas.

The photographs of instrument shops are from 1979. The biomorphic and at the same time mechanistic shapes of the instruments, in their strange, futurist precision, displayed in the shop windows as consumer goods, have a strong attraction to the artist. Music as influence is, next to architecture, one of the constant sources of inspiration in the work of Isa Genzken. During her stay in New York in 1981 her friend Dan Graham regularly took her to Post-Punk and No-Wave concerts, which so fascinated her that she began to take pictures of these concerts. For our exhibition Isa Genzken has put together a selection of these photographs.

The 1982 photograph "Courbet" is a b/w shot of a drawing of a woodland landscape with tree-fellers by the artist Gustave Courbet from the middle of the 19th century in original size. As in the well-known works of Isa Genzken's "Hi-Fi" series, photographs of advertisings of which were at this time the most modern and advanced Hi-Fi equipment, record-players and stereo-sets, "Courbet" too is the appropriation of a motif. In "Courbet" Isa Genzken furthermore seems to be commenting on the practice that was extremely unusual at that time among artists of having their work produced by others, just as Isa Genzken had done with her ellipsoid and hyperbolo sculptures which were computer-designed and then produced in professional carpenters' workshops: in the background in Courbet's woodland landscape we see a female figure walking away from the tree-fellers in the foreground towards a clearing.

In our exhibition space on the ground floor we show documentation material on the work of Isa Genzken from our archive, as well as loans from the artist and the computer scientist Ralph Krotz, who helped developing Isa Genzken's Ellipsoid and Hyperbolo sculptures in the late seventies/early eighties.

On the occasion of the exhibition we produce the artist book "Isa Genzken, Berlin 1973" in a signed and numbered edition of 100 copies. We will also publish an exhibition catalogue with a new text by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh.

On Thursday, March 28 at noon we will present a program of films by Isa Genzken in the nearby Delphi Cinema (Kantstrasse 12a/Entrance on Fasanenstrasse).