

**GALERIE NÄCHST ST. STEPHAN
ROSEMARIE SCHWARZWÄLDER**

ADRIAN SCHIESS Coquelicot

9 OCT – 22 DEC 2021

Opening: Saturday, October 9, 2021, noon – 5 p.m.

Introduction at 2 p.m.: Ulrich Loock

In this challenging new exhibition, suggestively entitled *Coquelicot* [Wild Poppy], Adrian Schiess marks out extreme elements of his oeuvre and at the same time displays their connection – which can be better understood by thinking of a Möbius strip, whose two reverse sides imperceptibly but unpreventably merge into one another. To bring seemingly contrary painterly conceptions into play is a matter of extreme radicality and precision, which only a complete lack of understanding for the artistic thinking behind it could confuse with indecision, randomness or variability.

The first panels of 1986/87, laid flat on the floor and covered in coloured, reflecting enamel paint, come at the beginning of Adrian Schiess's painterly oeuvre; the two panels in this new exhibition are from the years 2015 and 2019. For the first time now, chrome pigment is used for an enamel paint, whose dark grey-brown shade in combination with the micro-reflections of the metallic particles and reflections on the shining surface produces a coloration for which there is no known name. The term Schiess uses for this is *Abglanz* [radiance]. *Abglanz* points both to the explicit namelessness of this colour phenomenon and to its mingling with images that reflect the surroundings.

The smoothness, the sheen and the lucidity of the coloured panels contrast with the density, material richness, lustrelessness, non-uniformity and gestural disorientation of new, large-format paintings on paint-permeable gauze. Lying on top of one another on the floor, these were produced by a process that largely removes them from the painter's control and is only towards its end submitted to a final intervention. Whilst the production of the coloured panels is meticulously planned and executed by an outside workshop, the gauze painting is the product of long-term processes of sedimentation, removal and accumulation. Yet the two opposing painterly practices are in agreement on the point that the artistic subject forms itself through them by taking steps to counter its own dominion over the production of the work.

The new pictures are determined by brutal contrariness. Each picture is a scrap of painting – painting which consists in testing out, with largesse, carefree abandon, *je-m'enfous*-ism, a promiscuous readiness to take risks and a closeness to Nature, what it would be like if it were not painting but something other than painting, a *dehors* or 'outside-of' of painting – and accordingly this painting is to be seen as a question, the question of a border or frontier. The precipitate of an uncertainty tensed to breaking-point, however, is handed over to an apparatus of presentation – the larger, rectangular, bare canvas exposing its own colour – which displays the painting like a trophy, as evidence of an oscillation between painterly success and goodness-knows-what discarded remnants.

Schiess contrasts the radiance of *Abglanz* with the "never-ending stirring of the old gravy pot". With fleeting, wraith-like pictures infiltrated with colour on the one hand and with material-heavy sediments brought to the point in painterly manner on the other hand, the two poles of his work are in agreement in that they maintain a communication with the real, with that which lies on the other side of painting. This agreement is possible only through difference and follows from the historical – contemporary – impossibility of transposing reality into a consistent representation.

Thus the present exhibition is not evidence of painterly productivity, not the presentation of artistic innovation, nor of a developmental step forward – because this oeuvre consists in the exploration of a loss. Painterly constellations make this loss manifest and implement it as positivity. The beauty of the works exhibited consists in their implacable resistance to the option of summoning up, at least as spectres, the pictorial representations that have gone missing.

Ulrich Loock

ADRIAN SCHIESS (*1959 in Zurich, Switzerland) lives and works in Switzerland.

Exhibitions (Selection): Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, St. Gallen (2020); Kunsthalle Winterthur, Winterthur (2020); Kunsthaus Zug, Zug (2019); Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz (2018); Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain PACA, Marseille (2014); Musée d'Art Moderne, St. Etienne (2010); Musée national Fernand Léger, Biot (2009); Le Parvis Centre d'Art Contemporain, Tarbes (2008); Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis (2007); Städtische Galerie Nordhorn, Nordhorn (2005); Museu Serralves, Porto (2004); ZKM Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe (2004); Villa Merkel, Esslingen/Neckar (2004); Neues Museum, Nuremberg (2001); Kunsthaus Bregenz, Bregenz (1998); Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz (1996); Kunsthalle Zürich, Zurich (1994); Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (1993); Documenta IX, Kassel (1992); Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau (1990); Venice Biennale, Chiesa San Staë, Venice (1990).

ULRICH LOOCK

In the years 1985 to 2010, Ulrich Loock (b. 1953 in Braunschweig, Germany) was successively Director of the Kunsthalle Bern, and the Kunstmuseum Luzern and Acting Director of the Museu de Serralves in Porto, Portugal. From 1996 to 2018 he taught at the Hochschule der Künste in Bern and at various other places in Europe and Asia. He currently lives in Berlin as a freelance exhibition-maker and curator, and writer on contemporary art.