

Checklist

Venue: Kunstverein Friedrichshafen

Website: <https://www.kunstverein-friedrichshafen.de>

Instagram: @kunstvereinfriedrichshafen

Participating artist: Jan Zöllner

Exhibition title: *For every thing that is shown, some thing is hidden*

Dates: 25.06. – 21.08.2022

Curator and author of the exhibition text: Hannah Eckstein

Photographer: Kilian Blees

Courtesy: Jan Zöllner, Kunstverein Friedrichshafen, Robert Grunenberg, Berlin, Meyer Riegger, Karlsruhe, Gallery Ehrhardt-Floréz, Madrid

Exhibition Text

Jan Zöllner creates fantastic worlds which, however, never lose touch with reality. With their radiantly intense colours and clear forms his paintings may seem almost childlike. It quickly becomes clear though, that they are anything but naïve. For Zöllner reflects on the relationships and dependencies between people and systems, on social and societal dynamics as well as on economic cycles. And to do so he uses his own iconography of recurring motifs.

Urban structures appear in the form of fountains, walls, and streetlamps. Nature as guilelessly painted trees and bushes or stylised magpies and ravens. Trouser legs show up constantly as well, running restlessly through the pictures. Sometimes they are disembodied, other times their upper bodies consist of fountain pools or the aforementioned birds. Their "function" or essence does not seem to be fixed. It is clear, nevertheless, that they have something human about them, which in turn allows the assumption that they are metaphors for being human or personifications of the human. References to art history also flash up everywhere. Be it through colour gradients à la Clifford Still, which inspired Günther Förg to create his own Still paintings. Be it Förg's unmistakable grids and dots that appear as splashes of colour on the trouser legs. Or Martin Kippenberger's lantern for drunks, which can be discovered in the painting entitled "Lighting of the past keeps me running fast" (2021). The history of art and its icons show up as a huge mountain that the young artist has at his back. First one must work one's way up to conquer it in order to be able to determine one's very own artistic position.

Nature and culture constantly confront each other as dualistic poles. Within this dualism, Zöllner places the human being at the centre as a nodal point or point of intersection. As the only living being who, coming from nature, has achieved its subjugation through cultivation and thus created this differentiation in the first place. The fact that the elements earth, fire, and water are fundamental components of many pictorial creations do suggest so at least. For their mastery ultimately laid the foundation for the development of all social and economic systems at the beginning of human history.

The birds, trouser legs and fountains are then also depicted in the most diverse everyday situations, in which, however, something always seems to be out of whack. Everything is in motion, even hectic. This restlessness reveals the actual theme of Zöllner's works, as they try to give universal, as well as individual answers to the question what it means, to be integrated into a late capitalist society of exploitation and performance from which there is no escape. Not even with art. Thus, Zöllner repeatedly addresses the art business with its

production, presentation, and reception processes, practices and codes and makes the system in which he finds himself as an artist, as well as his own experiences within these structures, the foundation of his practice. Although this biographical aspect is not revealed boldly, it is always present and perceptible in his works and exhibitions.

Therefore, it is only consistent that in “For every thing that is shown, some thing is hidden” he plays with the expectations attached to an exhibition in general and to a painting exhibition in particular. For although exhibiting also means showing at the same time, he also redeems what is already implied in the title.

While entering the exhibition, one walk towards a large wall whereupon only one small paperwork with the inscription “NOTHING TO SEE HERE” can be found. Any other painter would most likely use this wall for a large-format painting. Zöllner takes the opposite approach and creates a moment of irritation as this message triggers to consider whether to leave again. When the decision is made to have a look at what supposedly is not to be seen, the viewer is confronted with a huge wall made of blue Styrodur, blocking the entrance and view into the exhibition space. A window is embedded in the wall giving the view free into the space. The wall also has a waist-high hole through which the legs of the other visitors can be traced. Along the opposite wall a path of soil, showing footprints, rises towards the corner of the room. Leaving all of this behind one reaches the exhibition space where finally canvases hang on the walls.

Also on the upper floor, large, wall-filling paintings hang at both face sides. An installation reminiscent of a river or Zöllner’s characteristic fountains fills one side of the room. All over the exhibition space more small mounds of soil are scattered. As if in a performative act, the visitors distribute the soil throughout the rooms and thus leave their traces. Increasingly the feeling comes up that we are standing in a three-dimensional version of the canvases and that we ourselves are the protagonists and thus elementary components of the exhibition. In these expansive installations, one inevitably becomes the restless trouser legs, magpies and ravens that populate Jan Zöllner’s paintings. The exhibition becomes a stage and the recipients the actors.

The performative aspect of the exhibition is accompanied by the fact that the large styrodur wall will be reused as a stage-set for a play that Jan Zöllner currently develops with his childhood friend Felix Baumann. The installation of the exhibition was already the first part of the collaboration and served as a test how elements of the visual and performing arts can be combined and enter an exchange.

“For every thing that is shown, some thing is hidden” is thus not a conventional painting exhibition in which the viewers are sprinkled by images. Rather, they must work their way through the exhibition to open it up, to discover it and to find what they were possibly (not) looking for. They are rewarded with a kind of projection screen that allows to reflect, from a certain distance, our own existence, what we strive for, what we desire and what social and societal function we fulfil.

Jan Zöllner (born 1992 in Haslach, Germany) lives and works in Karlsruhe. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts with Leni Hoffmann and Marijke van Warmerdam and at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts with Jean Marc Bustamante. He received a working scholarship from the Stiftung Kunstfonds, the 24th Federal Prize for Art Students and the Postgraduate Prize from the Kunstakademie Karlsruhe.

His works have been shown in solo exhibitions at the Städtische Galerie Ostfildern, Meyer Riegger, Karlsruhe, Robert Grunenberg, Berlin, the Ehrhardt Flórez Gallery, Madrid, Spazio Buonasera, Turin, DINAMIKA, Moscow and in group exhibitions at the Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn, the Baumwollspinnerei, Leipzig, the Kunstverein Heidelberg, Coherent, Brussels, and the Osnova Gallery, Moscow, among others.

Documentation

Photo 001:

“Nothing to see here”, 2022, pencil on paper, 30 x 50 cm

“PASSAGE”, 2022, styrodur, acrylic on canvas, glass, soil, streetlamp, dimension variable

“Dream of dreamers close by the tress”, 2022, watercolor, oil pastel and pencil on paper, mounted on wood, 50 x 70 cm

Photo 002:

“Professional painters rest in the riverbed and collect flowers”, 2022, flowers, soil, trousers, canvas, acrylic, shoes, clay, dimension variable

Photo 003:

“Nothing to see here”, 2022, Pencil on paper, 30 x 50 cm

“PASSAGE”, 2022, styrodur, acrylic on canvas, glass, soil, streetlamp, dimension variable

Photo 004:

“Dream of dreamers close by the tress”, 2022, watercolor, oil pastel and pencil on paper, mounted on wood, 50 x 70 cm

Photo 005:

“PASSAGE”, 2022, styrodur, acrylic on canvas, glass, soil, streetlamp, dimension variable,

“Lightning of the past keeps me running fast, so fast”, 2021, acrylic, oil pencil, pastel, charcoal on canvas, 250 x 200 c,

“One view is another’s idea”, 2022, acrylic, oil chalk, pastel, chalk on canvas, 80 x 120 cm

Photo 006:

“One view is another’s idea”, 2022, acrylic, oil chalk, pastel, chalk on canvas, 80 x 120 cm,

“Spätsommertag”, 2022, acrylic, oil chalk, pastel, chalk on canvas, 80 x 120 cm,

“PASSAGE”, 2022, styrodur, acrylic on canvas, glass, soil, streetlamp, dimension variable, “Nothing to see (here)”, 2022, pencil, pen on wood, 30 x 50 cm

Photo 006a:

“Nothing to see (here)”, 2022, pencil, pen on wood, 30 x 50 cm

Photo 007:

“Lightning of the past keeps me running fast, so fast”, 2021, acrylic, oil pencil, pastel, charcoal on canvas, 250 x 200 cm

“One view is another’s idea”, 2022, acrylic, oil chalk, pastel, chalk on canvas, 80 x 120 cm

“Spätsommertag”, 2022, acrylic, oil chalk, pastel, chalk on canvas, 80 x 120 cm

Photo 008:

“One view is another’s idea”, 2022, acrylic, oil chalk, pastel, chalk on canvas, 80 x 120 cm

Photo 009:

“Spätsommertag”, 2022, acrylic, oil chalk, pastel, chalk on canvas, 80 x 120 cm

Photo 010:

“Professional painters rest in the riverbed and collect flowers”, 2022, flowers, soil, trousers, canvas, acrylic, shoes, clay, dimension variable

“Nothing to see (here)”, 2022, pencil on paper, 30 x 50 cm

Photo 011:

“There is a reason you can’t sleep”, 2022, charcoal and pastel on canvas, 200 x 250 cm

“Professional painters rest in the riverbed and collect flowers”, 2022, flowers, soil, trousers, canvas, acrylic, shoes, clay, dimension variable

“Nothing to see (here)”, 2022, pencil on paper, 30 x 50 cm

Photo 012:

“Professional painters rest in the riverbed and collect flowers”, 2022, flowers, soil, trousers, canvas, acrylic, shoes, clay, dimension variable

“Nothing to see (here)”, 2022, pencil on paper, 30 x 50 cm

“Dig your fountain where the birds hide from heat”, 2022, acrylic, oil pencil, pastel and charcoal on canvas, 200 x 350 cm

Photo 013:

“Dig your fountain where the birds hide from heat”, 2022, acrylic, oil pencil, pastel and charcoal on canvas, 200 x 350 cm