

We are very proud to announce Dirk Stewen's second solo exhibition at c/o - Atle Gerhardsen.

Dirk Stewen will start the year 2009 at c/o - Atle Gerhardsen with new works on paper. The show is titled 'droplets', comprising about thirty watercolours, some of which include installation components.

Working with watercolour on paper from the post-war era - the artist uses paper containing potato starch, which has a slightly ligneous texture - is a pivotal development in Stewen's work. The paper is mostly taken from old art lovers' collection archives: the colourful reproductions of old masterpieces have been removed from the single sheets, often leaving behind a line of glue, usually including the title, and at times even a short interpretation of the absent image. Stewen fills the vacant spaces with partly figurative, partly abstract compositions.

The figurative works are inhabited by a panopticum of bulky characters, equipped with old-fashioned accessories such as stovepipe hats or riding boots. Most often they cannot be identified in terms of gender; at times they seem melancholy, ominous, or even slightly languid. The light pastel tones of the watercolours stand in stark opposition to the corpulence of the represented forms.

In the abstract works, Dirk Stewen is interested in the balance of simple geometric forms, which he arranges by size, colour and shape in different ways on the antique paper. There are compilations of colourful circles or cones, which seem to be connected by the sheer force of gravity. Some revoke their perfect basic shape, and bleed into the other elements, merging either with the other circles, or with the remnants of the glue on the paper. Some keep up the appearance of a three-dimensional form on a plane; others blend in with the plane and counter this illusion.

The artist sometimes compared working on his watercolours with photography: he mixes colour and water, converting the thought or desired form onto paper in a short amount of time. Similarly, in a photographic exposure, the decisive moment passes by in one fell swoop. Afterwards, the result could still be modified, but only through careful movement of the paper, such as in the developing bath, or by meticulous reworking of the surface still wet with traces of colour or ink, perhaps akin to retouching a photograph.

With 'droplets' Stewen probes the relational equilibrium within the presented group of work, both within each single work, and in the combination of this show, expanding the presentation with elements taken from other realms of his work. Black-inked wooden squares or small ladders

sometimes complement the watercolours, which are framed either alone, or in pairs. In this, the artist sees a kind of necessary interpunction, or an aid, allowing the works to permeate into the space.

Dirk Stewen was born in Dortmund in 1972, and now lives and works in Hamburg. Parallel to his exhibition with c/o - Atle Gerhardsen, the artist has another solo exhibition with Tanya Bonakdar in New York: 'Dirk Stewen: Paper Eye Collection', Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, opening: 15 January, 2009.

In May 2009, his works will be on display in the Galleri MGM in Oslo, and from 19 September 2009, in the Overbeck Gesellschaft in Lübeck.

*(This document was automatically generated by Contemporary Art Library.)*