

Alison Jacques Gallery announces our first solo exhibition of German artist Bernd Ribbeck. In this show, he will exhibit a new series of small-scale paintings on wood and paper in which saturated, abstract compositions oscillate between metaphysical and material aspirations. Ribbeck works with a timeless language that seems new, yet familiar, and operates outside of any historical specificity. A sense of space is suggested by the arrangement of shapes and forms on the picture plane, without the use of perspective as a device. Ribbeck's approach to materials and colour is sensitive and intuitive, scoring with a biro, sanding the surface and layering colour. The process remains visible, so we can consider how spiritual concerns may be materialised in art.

Ribbeck draws inspiration from visionary individuals operating on the fringes of art history whose work often orientates towards spiritual ideas. Ribbeck's references include German church architect Dominikus Böhm (1880-1955), and the organic constructions of American architect Bruce Goff (1904-1982). Their buildings provide concrete models of fusion between rational Modernist ideas and clerical pretensions of spirituality. Another influence is the utopian spirit of Die Gläserne Kette – (Glass Chain, also known as Utopian Correspondence), a process of communication between a group of German Expressionistic architects in the early Twentieth Century. They exchanged adventurous and poetic visions in letters and drawings which resulted in unrealised architectural schemes. Their 'proposals' maintain a sense of possibility lost in the built projects of the same practitioners.

This interest in unmaterialised visions extends to the abstraction of Hilma Af Klimt, a Swedish painter (1882- 1944) whose spiritual paintings were diagrams of her occult beliefs. With her works she purported to communicate with the soul, opening a door to another level of perception. She was an artist who practiced in isolation from the mainstream of her Avant-Garde contemporaries, and there is a sense of potentiality that remains latent in the work's utopian ideals. Ribbeck expresses interest in the way religious icons function, with no gap between what is represented and the image as an object: during prayer they can perform the same role as the depicted deity itself. The small scale of Ribbeck's paintings and works on paper function in a comparable way: inviting the viewer to experience them intimately, reading their pictorial forms whilst leading the gaze into a transcendental realm.

Bernd Ribbeck (born 1974) lives and works in Berlin. He studied at the Kunstakademie, Dusseldorf; Akademie der bildenden Künste, Munich and Hochschule der Künste, Berlin. In 2008 Ribbeck participated in Manifesta, Trentino-South Tyrol, Italy. Group shows include Long Dark, International 3, Manchester (forthcoming 2009); Remote Memories, K110 / Arthana Foundation, Dusseldorf (2009); Ich und Du, Kunstverein Oldenburg (2009); run run, GI Glasgow

International Festival (2008); Freunde für immer, Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn (2007); Neuer Konstruktivismus, Bielefelder Kunstverein, Bielefeld (2007)

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