

Benedikt Hipp

Water from the Source

19.3. – 23.4.22

We have been working together since 2007. And since that time, I have repeatedly experienced your works as new narrations on how the body is set in relation to the world – or rather to worlds, because many of your motifs show abstract image spaces or are stages containing architectural and landscape elements. An early work was entitled “Ein Körper ist schon mal was” (“A Body is Already Something”). Where does your interest in ever new formulations between space and body come from?

Hipp: “In a certain respect, every historical time has its own views on the human body and its task and function, its curability, fate or self-determination. The space that surrounds us and which we inhabit and work on is therefore also shaped by the respective understanding of corporeality. The body has been at the center of our discourse for several decades, with debates ranging from gender and race to individuality and integrity. The past two years have shown us how spaces have changed since our bodies are plagued by a virus. Or virtual space that raises the idea of the body to an entirely new level. It is easier there to adopt new features. Virtual space and virtual bodies intermesh more and more with real space and real bodies. Corporeality is always also in part fiction. For the reason alone that we always perceive ourselves only from the inside. We always potentiate an image of ourselves and project it onto the world that surrounds us. In historical terms, we have learned to grasp ourselves as a unity over the past centuries, a unity that extracts itself from the whole, that even seeks to dominate the whole in an omnipresent way and sees itself at the top of this hierarchy of development. Perhaps it is time to reconsider this supreme position and this concept of unity, because the boundaries between body and body, between body and space, between individual and society, are starting to break open. Maybe we can learn to understand ourselves as a part and thus face everyone and everything with more respect.”

Although your works, be it paintings or objects, reflect the present and open up new perspectives, they start off with very tradition production techniques: oil painting on wood bearing the entire history of painting or the burning of ceramics with all the sociocultural associations it gives rise to. You combine the past and present in your work. What are the aspects that trigger you?



Untitled, 2021

oil and varnish on wood
104 × 76 × 4 cm

Hipp: “I do not distinguish that much between old and new techniques, because they are all possibilities of our times from which one can draw, and why shouldn't they be used? The past century was inspired by the progressive belief in the new and the categorical rejection of the old. Our century shows us the fatal geopolitical, social and ecological consequences of some of these developments, which at the time originated in the promise of salvation of the new. Today, the belief in economic growth is called into question and the attempt is made to reassess the new. Almost exemplary for what I have just said is my video “AEON” that I was able to produce in 2021 with the German Academy Rome Villa Massimo. The protagonists of the video are ceramic objects that I burned for several days in my self-made wood-burning kiln. An old cultural technique that was highly cherished and maintained especially in Asian countries, which I have been dealing with for several years.”

Kadel Willborn

Birkenstraße 3

D – 40233 Düsseldorf

www.kadel-willborn.de

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The burning of wood and the high temperature of melting wooden ash accumulating on the object already create surfaces with totally new qualities. The burning process appears very archaic, it is enormously time-consuming and requires uninterrupted, deep concentration over a number of days. The high temperatures of around 1,300°C inside the kiln lead to results that partially look like solidified lava or melted stones. One almost has the feeling of establishing contact to prehistoric times. In the video, one then sees these burned objects moving through black, infinite outer space, as if they were planets. The video was produced using hi-tech animation in extremely high resolution. It reminds one a bit of Stanley Kubrick's "2001: A Space Odyssey."

The title of your current show at our gallery is "Water from the Source." The exhibition features a group of new ceramics and paintings. On several levels, we see collections of abstract shapes, body elements or factually the collection of ceramics in the room. The title, "Water from the Source," simultaneously alludes to the concept of resource that you have been interested in for quite a while. What are the most important aspects of the exhibition in your view?



AEON Df8, 2021

ceramic, natural fly-ash-glaze
15 x 55 x 50 cm

Hipp: "The first approach that I see connected with the title is clearly of an ecological and ethical nature. I am interested in the relationship between ecology and ethics in many respects, for it is the greatest challenge we are faced with today. Especially the political situation in Europe in view of the gruesome invasion of Ukraine once again shows us how urgently we need a change in thinking and how closely ethical questions are related to resources. I am therefore very committed and try to make an active contribution to the discourse as far as it is possible in my frame of work.

But resources can also be knowledge pools or sources and collections. I deal with collections and accumulations. I personally grew up surrounded by a huge collection of votive offerings and am therefore probably sensitized to the theme of collecting. Collections, accumulations and archives generate certain codes through their components. They not only encode their own stocks and the knowledge associated with them, meaning their resources, they also formulate beyond the sum of their components. This can be delicate theories or weak flows that allude to something that is not yet ripe enough or too vague to speak of. It also has something magical about it, and something source-like, a beginning, and the future course can not yet be recognized. I am interested in this vulnerable moment and its uncertainty, and if you ask me about the most important aspects of my exhibition, then that would probably be the vulnerability of all life and the space we inhabit in the times we live in."

Biographical note:

Benedikt Hipp's (DE 1977) works are known through numerous international exhibitions. Solo exhibitions in the past years at, among others, the Wilhelm-Hack-Museum Ludwigshafen (2015), Kunstverein Bielefeld (2010), Kunstpalais Erlangen (2012), and Art Basel Statements (2009); participations in highly acclaimed group shows at, among others, the Fondazione Memmo, Rome (2021), Haus der Kunst Munich (2018), Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (2011), CAPC – Musée d'Art Contemporain Bordeaux (2012), and Kunstverein Hannover (2012). Benedikt Hipp was already included in the "Lexikon der Gegenwartskunst" ("Lexicon of Contemporary Art") in 2010 and has published several monographic catalogs, including "Ich hab meinen Augen nicht getraut...", Kerber Verlag, 2015, "Luxstätt," DISTANZ, 2015 and "Benedikt Hipp," argobooks, 2009. In 2020/21 Benedikt Hipp was awarded the Rome Prize by the German Academy Rome Villa Massimo, one of Germany's most renowned prizes.

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