

Heimo Zobernig

From November 16, 2024, to February 21, 2025

Opening, Friday, November 15, 2024, from 6 to 9 pm (Nuit des Bains)

Week-end des Bains, Saturday, November 16, 2024, from 11 am to 6 pm

In 1996, Heimo Zobernig produced an emblematic edition for the CEC. At the time, Zobernig's focus was on handmade and artisanal objects. His method? Printing old, damaged and broken lithographic stones. These stones, of which there were 15, were simply polished, then coated with black ink, the printing being limited to a simple transfer onto the paper, revealing shapes and lines resulting from the breaks in these modified surfaces, as they were. These 15 lithographs were reduced to a black, monochrome surface, each printed in an edition of four copies, one e.a. and one H.C. These black rectangles or squares on a white background bore direct comparison to Malevich's historic black square, with all the distancing, irony and mischief contained in this gesture. Zobernig deconstructs and simplifies the historical references to modernism and minimalism with which his work is associated, shifting them to the field of design and graphics. The technical criteria of a craft – at the time, lithography – are also taken literally: a surface coated with ink, transferred directly onto a sheet of paper, the only motif being the lines of the breaks in this series of stones, found in an old stockpile, forgotten and unusable. A kind of game with a local situation, that of this obsolete workshop from another time, playfully reactivated.

Zobernig pushes his quest for simplification, clarity and neutrality to the level of the simple object. Artistic expression is reduced to a minimum. His strategies include objectification, reduction, standardisation and systemisation. This distancing enables him to shift his perspective, to cultivate a pragmatism that is always tinged with irony, free from pathos, and foremost determined by an unwavering search for autonomy. In reality, Zobernig approaches text like a graphic designer; colour like a "scientist"; objects like an industrialist; space like a scenographer or an architect.

The artist's production system is broken down into several series, including the shelving structures and bookcases that seem to have been inspired by the famous Billy model, emblematic of Ikea furniture shops. An ironic reference, perhaps, to the modules created by Donald Judd or those used in Robert Morris' scenographies. These bookcase-structures first appeared in his solo exhibition at the Kunsthalle Zürich in 2011, then at the Museum Bärengasse in 2015, at the KUB in Bregenz and, more recently, at the Mumok in Vienna in 2021. These large series of bookcases are transformed into exhibition displays, architectural structures that intersperse, enter into dialogue with, and sometimes exalt or outright transform the architecture of these institutions.

For some years now, Zobernig has been introducing colour and material variations into his work, as well as sculptural figures, like mannequins in a shop window: non-gendered, schematic, standard human bodies. Geometric, modular figures with balanced proportions, envisaged as elements of architecture, in the image of Le Corbusier's Modulor. Other stereotypes spring to mind, emblems of the monumental statuary: from ancient statues to the robot-women in *Metropolis*, Georg Kolbe's sculpture *Der Morgen* for Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's German Pavilion in Barcelona, and even statuettes from the Oscars or Hollywood film credits.

Zobernig introduces a break with this monumental, authoritarian classicism. He manipulates, deconstructs, literally turns his figures upside down and sometimes even disguises them. As

composites, they are made up of several body parts from different sources: the artist's head or body glued to bits of old sculptures. Others are reduced to their production method: from 3D to the first bronze casts, left in their raw, unfinished state, broken, more or less well reconstructed, oxidised, chipped or rusted. Some mannequins hang from the shelves of his bookcase-structures, twisted, dislocated, more dramatic, oscillating between mummified, digital and archaic beings.

Zobernig also uses his own body, practising self-reference and self-mockery. In a video made in 1989 (*No. 3*), he dances, wearing an improbable wig with long hair made of chiffon. He re-enacted this scene in 2023 (*no 33*), wearing a similar outfit. His body and gestures had changed, becoming stiffer, clumsier, more tired: distancing and irony applied to himself.

Heimo Zobernig's exhibition at the CEC features a range of productions and editions: five metal bookcases; three screenprints in three combinations of colours and three different qualities of paper (black/white/silver), made up of horizontal lines and the words SELF SHELF EDITION: self-editions, self-shelves, shelf-editions. SELF SHELF, the phonetic proximity of these two words, typographical too, with an extra H between SELF and SHELF, H as in Heimo, H as in a shelf. A play on sounds and words, an association that Zobernig makes with humour between himself and a shelf. These "crosswords" could well have been the title of this exhibition: objects produced, edited and exhibited together with their production system. Shelves, screenprints, flyers and posters produced in Vienna and Geneva, by Zobernig and the CEC, from a distance.

The three 50 x 70 cm screenprints, each with a print run of 10, are also available as flyers (200 copies of one of the screenprints on a white background, paper size: A4) and three posters (three copies, in F4 format). Each of these large posters is printed in black, breaking down and recomposing the different elements: one poster with only the horizontal lines, another with only the words, and the third with the lines and the words.

Heimo Zobernig was born in Mauthen in 1958. He lives and works in Vienna. Some of his most recent exhibitions include: *Heimo Zobernig & László Moholy-Nagy*, Galerie Nagel Draxler Crypto Kiosk, Berlin (2024); *Heimo Zobernig*, Galerija Manuš, Split (2024); *Richard Hoeck/Heimo Zobernig*, 1997/2013, Meliksetian Briggs gallery, Los Angeles (2024); *Heimo Zobernig*, Meyer Kainer Gallery, Vienna, (2024); *Heimo Zobernig*, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris (2023); *Heimo Zobernig. Der Bildhauer als Zeichner*, Kunstraum St. Virgil, Salzburg (2023); *Das Grafische Werk*, Museum der Moderne, Salzburg (2022); *Heimo Zobernig. tHIs oLD nEw*, Galerie Bärbel Grässlin, Frankfurt (2022); *Enjoy*, MUMOK, Vienna (2021); *Heimo Zobernig. Spirit Fuck Painting*, MARE, Bucharest (2022).

His work has also featured in various group exhibitions, including *ECCENTRIC. Aesthetics of Freedom*, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich (2024); *Kiesler Today. Work dialogues with contemporaries*, Kunsthaus Zug, Zug (2024); *Bernard Frize*, Matt Mullican, Niele Toroni, Heimo Zobernig, Galerie Micheline Szwajcer, Antwerp (2024); *From the Collection: Together - Collaborative Art Practices*, S.M.A.K., Ghent (2024); *Dan Graham. Optics and Humor*, Galerie Meyer Kainer, Vienna (2024); *Galerie Christine Mayer*, Munich (2024); *Soliloquies*, Petzel Gallery, New York (2024); *Blank.Raw. Illegible. Artists' Books as Statement (1960-2022)*, Leopold-Hoesch-Museum, Düren (2023); *HERE AND NOW II. Vienna Sculpture 2023*, Neuer Kunstverein Wien, Vienna (2023); *Out of the Box*, Schaulager, Basel (2023); *Alvin Baltrop. Wade Guyton*, Heimo Zobernig, Galerie Francesca Pia, Zurich (2022); *Avant-garde and Contemporary Art*, Belvedere Museum Vienna, Belvedere 21, Vienna (2022); *The Drawing Centre Show*, Consortium Museum, Dijon (2022).

The CEC is supported by the Département de la culture et de la transition numérique of the City of Geneva, the Loterie Romande and a private Geneva-based foundation.

