

Press release

Gerwald Rockenschaub use it, break it, fix it, try it

Exhibition duration: 14 March – 30 April 2014

Under the title *use it, break it, fix it, try it*, Gerwald Rockenschaub once again shows his dedication to an exhibition practice that uses visual links in precisely exploring the distinctive architectural features of the gallery space. In his current exhibition at Georg Kargl Fine Arts, Rockenschaub integrates various existing work groups while breaking with perceptual habits by setting them in new spatial relationships and contexts of color and material-aesthetics. He positions his artworks in the space with exacting calculation, engaging in a playful and at times ironic game between the varying work complexes: use it, break it, fix it, try it.

Immediately in the entry area, Rockenschaub blocks the visitor's path with a powerful sculpture composed of three massive blocks stacked irregularly. Painted white, black and gray, they enter into a harmonious chromatic and formal symbiosis with the white walls, the metal staircase leading downward, and the gray reception desk. The latter, originally painted traffic purple, is a memento left behind by the artist as a permanent spatial intervention after the end of his last show at the gallery. In contrast to the entry area, the first room downstairs is not dominated by a single work; it is more marked by color. Although each of the walls carries only a single small object consisting of two strongly contrasting color blocks, the works unfold a striking presence and dynamism. Here one can appreciate the essence of Rockenschaub's skill as an artist: an ability to make spaces experienceable anew through carefully considered minimalism realized in daring color combinations, paired with perfect technical execution and an unflinching sense of material-aesthetics.

Taking drawing and painting as his point of departure, Rockenschaub has since the early 1980s developed a simple formal language borrowed from the world of pictograms and popular culture, materializing it in work which integrates art, design and media. The finished product owes its form to changing standards of technical realizability and to the modern industrial material canon. Pointedly, on the wall opposing the gallery wall where in the previous exhibition, *Texts in Art*, pencil drawings from the years 1982–1984 were shown, Rockenschaub hangs drawings from 2007, drawing attention ironically to the continuity and the stringency of his own artistic formal vocabulary.

In the skylight room, Rockenschaub impressively demonstrates the radical developmental potential that can slumber in a work complex that one would assume had already been thoroughly formulated. Inlays of colored acrylic glass, which in color and form are reminiscent of those he first developed in 2007, have lost their object character in that they are no longer mounted on an oak frame, rather surrounded by it. The massively constructed frame underlines the works' pictoriality, and in the end it also points toward Rockenschaub's expanded conception of painting, which in the last thirty years he has continually redefined and condensed. The acrylic glass inlays, which exclude any and every hint of a personal stylistic hand, are strictly arranged along a line defined by their lower edges. As such they are set in relationship with colorful wall objects of MDF. It almost seems as if the pictogram-like forms have freed themselves from the pictorial context, becoming independent objects that leave their assigned place in the space and populate the walls at varying heights. Formally they are reminiscent of balloons, overlapping water drops or entangled scrawls.

In an amalgamation of high and popular culture they touch on a discourse of abstraction and objectivity. They redefine the playing field beyond the conventional boundaries between painting and sculpture, entering into a union of picture and object, of the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional.

The individual work was never the quintessence of Gerwald Rockenschaub's art. It is his overall intervention in the space, set in motion by the particularities of the individual location, which steers the gaze through precisely conceived placement of the work, breaking and expanding accepted perceptual habits. His exhibitions always seem to follow an overriding logic, whereby – to use a metaphor recalling Gerwald Rockenschaub's work as a DJ – the fader has been shifted in recent years from the ironic, cool and distanced to a new cheerful playfulness.

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