

CHECKPOINT ILGEN #3

GLOBAL ART

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Mayen Beckman

Dear Cristina Barroso, Anil Revri , Excellences, sehr geehrte Damen und Herren, liebe Freunde it is a great pleasure to warmly welcome you all to this evening that gives us the chance to enter into the discussion with four indeed very different artists, to enter into a discussion that the paintings and sculptures in these spaces started the moment they left their crates.

13 years ago I planned an exhibition on equilibrium for Pels-Leusden Gallery here in Berlin and - looking for artists that might add a new aspect to this theme, that seemed to be definitely defined by Alexander Calder and George Rickey I encountered sculptures by Fré Ilgen on the Art Cologne Fair. They were quite different from those you see today, broad steel spirals answered by lines formed by squared timber, each side painted in echoing colors, and monochrome balls. These hanging, slowly turning sculptures evoked concrete, or even constructivist paintings and drawings from Holland or Russia. Thus I came to know the Ilgen couple and imported their art plus the artists to Berlin.

At that time they had not only both been extremely successful creating their artworks, but also had organised more than 40 international exhibitions, symposia and multidisciplinary conferences all over Europe including Russia and the US. So here we see, that both can rely on an old experience in organising events quite similar to what they are organising as a present to us and their own curiosity again today with their Ilgen Checkpoints. But at that time they were tired of all stress and strain the organisation of these events costs and decided to move to the far end of Holland and just develop their - and in the end Fré Ilgens art.

The decision for Berlin and for the reestablishment of the artistic dialogue comes at a moment, when his art has developed into a great freedom of using all possibilities - sculpture and paint offer - from concrete and monochrome to free form, object trouvé and almost baroque coloring combined in installations that may be as large as 30 metres long or elegantly small like the wonderful piece that is brandnew and hanging above our heads. It consists of three independent parts that are hanging in perfect harmony.

The sideways of Ilgen as a painter as opposed to Ilgen as a color intellectual play an increasingly big roll in these sculptures. Without the paintings he would not have developed this freedom. A recent painting you can see at this wall, reflecting thoughts inspired by the Elgin Marbles. So with a great freedom and experience coming from intense work both developing the own art and with great curiosity travelling, seeking contact with intellectuals and artists all over the world and "collecting" work of colleagues as well as the personal contact to critics, collectors or scientists we are now invited to share and discuss the observations and questions that have accumulated and learn from the many different personal experiences what an intricately complicated mosaic the simple six letter word - Global - is.

Cristina Barroso born in Sao Paulo, Brasil, studied Art and Philosophy in USA, lives and works in Sao Paulo, some time in San Francisco or Milan, and Stuttgart. Basis of her art are very often the necessary aids of the modern nomad: Maps of countries or cities form the basis for images of the power of the magnet producing the order of the magnetic field or magnified imprints of a thumb, the image of the identity of the single person. Flight Tickets may carry in wonderful blue the old images of stellar constellations like "Perseus".

Using the title "Schaltzentrale", being both control center and nerve center she developed images that nestle against the convex walls of the Munich Police center where she uses the abstract form of our brain in combination with sequences of numbers and short evocations in a way that makes me hope that the use of the brain and the quality of emotions is still superior to all the abstract powers of rules and regulations or the powers of the computer. Crossing the border from the known and defined as is the map to the emotional and private that starts the moment we use it like hope, despair, dreams - is well defined in a poem that the dutch writer Cees Notebom wrote for Cristina Barroso and that I felt is very beautiful:

*Ice age, star time,
my past exists in locked up images
called out by fire and water,
a registry of water and sand.
That is how I show myself
how I hide myself
in cyphers of height and depth
layers of color
on an atlas as big as the world*

Here you will see paintings, that are quite typical for her work: The Map of the Stuttgart area has been flooded by a strange semitransparent material and like islands blue dots representing places in the big oceans pop up. A raster of red dots changes the distance of your perspective and adds a new imaginary rhythm to the painting.

Ali Hassan who can not be here today, but is represented by Ms Adrian von Roques was born in Doha in Qatar and stayed in the arabic world for the major part of his life. About the same age as the other artists we are encountering this evening, he studied history in Qatar and attended a seminar on restauration in Belgium. Except a graphic course in Cairo he seems to be a self-taught artist. The beauty of the arabic script becomes center of his artistic interest, in early time it is the full alphabeth consisting of 28 letters, later he begins to concentrate and meditate on the letter Nun. Nun is the 25th letter of the arabic alphabet. It comes from the phönizian letter Nun and therefore is related to the latin N, the greek Ny and the hebräic Nun. It is the equivalent of the number 50. To this simple everyday meaning of Nun I am absolutely sure exists a religious, spiritual meaning, that hopefully Ms. Adrian von Roques will tell us about later.

With the meditative consequence of a Zen master he makes this letter dance and fly, makes it "unreadable", it grows huge or moves elegantly and in some of his pictures I feel reminded of the Gilgamesch series of Willi Baumeister. Is this Artist a "Global " Artist? It seems consequent that aparently his only solo show up to now was in Japan. The enormous appreciation of meditative, expressive calligraphy that made japanese artists like Yu Ichi or Morita big in japanese eyes seems the basis to this exchange. Last, but definitely not least Anil Revri, an indian born painter, trained in Bombay, living in the US, first in New York and now since many years in Washington DC. The work of Mr Revri has changed a lot over the years and seems to be good for further surprises.

The paintings shown here are from the latest series. The perfectly rectangular canvas is structured by a dense mace of light lines, modern, unsystematic sisters of the marvellous stonewindows that you can find in Mughal India. They run irregularily like the paths that animals tread in nature, seen from high above, cutting the space between them into a multitude of irregularily shaped colourfields. Not one of these little islands has the same shape as the other, like there are almost no identical things in gods creation. Wonderfully warm colors define these fragmented islands sometimes just plain, sometimes in a complicated multilayerd color structure.

The roads may be plain, just defined by a white line, almost like a street, or travelled by a multitude of dots like white blood corpuscles travelling in our veins. What we see may be just abstract, but that seems highly unlikely. Having had the experience with art of the Aborigines, we feel that in a spiritual world that is unlike the vertically structured christianity, experiences as we see here must be possible.

"According to the Upanishads the individual self and the universal self are simply two manifestations of one force within a greater cosmos" says one source and in Taoism, the path or the way, represented by the Tao , "comes together in a field of polar energies – thus implying the absence of dualism, as these forces create the world in which all life plays, and instill in us the instinctive knowledge of the primal forces at work in the human psyche" - says another source. Listening to these explanations I feel, that here, without knowing we are seduced into a world of beauty that seems global and needs not to be defined by its origin. But as soon as we want to know more about the image we see there is no way around the personal and local sources of every single artist.

Tonight is the time to come to know art and artists, Sunday will be the time to dicuss theoretical issues. Lets have a great evening!

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