

# GEORG KARGL FINE ARTS

PRESS INFORMATION

## **MODERN ALIBIS**

Thomas Locher & Willem de Rooij

Opening: October 24, 2019, 6 pm – 9 pm

On view: October 28 – December 21, 2019

In “*MODERN ALIBIS*” Thomas Locher and Willem de Rooij deal with the changing of the aesthetic and social practice of knowledge production. To what extent do images and linguistic signs already contain their own vectors for interpretation? To what extent does the contemporary mediality of information influence the relationship between sender and receiver, between subject and object? Approaches of information-aesthetics and the examination of material-immanent production of meaning contribute significantly to the considerations of the two artists about different forms of knowledge transfer. Autonomy and the agenda of language, image and the work of art as a heuristic tool for viewing the world are put to the test here.

Thomas Locher, a pioneering German artist for the realm of neo-conceptual art, achieved international renown for his spatial text works and installations. He has been consistently concerned for many years with foundations like the grammatical order of language and the complexity of its functioning in legal texts or economics, foundations that seem permanent, but nonetheless contain a portion of fictionality. His engagement with systems of meaning stretches also to their content, especially the political implications and the practical impacts on the life reality of individuals and groups. If we speak about Thomas Locher’s works, we are tempted to follow the conceptuality of the theories that lie at their foundation. But his works do not represent linguistic or sociological research, nor are they theories set into image. They stand as artworks, as aesthetic units of their own, their consistent design, sober on first glance, on second glance soaked in irony, allow us to follow his considerations without reference to theories. The text for his series of works about Karl Marx stems from “*Capital, Volume I, Book One: The Process of Production of Capital*”, “*part 1: commodities and money, section 4: The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof*” (published in English in 1887). In his text-based objects and installations Thomas Locher artistically examines the subject of language, the subject of human rights, that of the economy and the civic subject. Starting from an alienated and unequal relationship between subject and object, the new works are dedicated to the literal meaning of the letter. They are about a subjectivity contained in the lowest forms of the thing.

Thomas Locher has exhibited internationally since the 1980s; his works are represented in public and private collections. He has been Rector of the Leipzig Academy of Visual Arts since 2017, taught at the Royal Danish Academy Copenhagen from 2008 to 2016 and is mentor at the Berlin Program for Artists. Recent solo exhibitions: “*Homo Oeconomicus*”, Secession, Vienna (2013), “*Kubus. Sparda Art Award*”, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart (2013), „*Post-Information*“ Silberkuppe Berlin (2015), „*Dead Letters. Living Words. Dying metaphors. graft, press, hang*“, Reinhard Hauff Stuttgart (2017) and *The Shape of Words to Come Edge / Corner / Margin*, Helga de Alvear Madrid (2019).

Recent group exhibitions: to expose, to show, to demonstrate, to inform, to offer. Artistic practices around 1990 mumok, Vienna (2015), “*Class languages*”, District Berlin and

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Kunstverein for the Rhineland and Westphalia, Düsseldorf (2017), *"The State is not a Work of Art"*, Sihtasutus Tallinna Kunstihoone Fond, Tallinn (2018).

Willem de Rooij has been producing hand woven, abstract tapestries since 2009. The interplay of warp and weft, the weave, the tension, the materiality and thickness of the threads, their colors and textures, are all of crucial importance to these works. The fact that they are installed on walls makes it hard to categorize them: textile compositions or pictorial objects? An intricate visual dilemma reflective of de Rooij's diverse aesthetic focused on the question of pictoriality. Although, despite this slippage, one is tempted to read them as de Rooij's version of "pictures" in an oeuvre that has historically consisted primarily of filmic and object-based works; the weavings aim to generate meaning through the material they are made of, not through external references. These works have not arisen from a particular interest in textiles or craft skills, for instance, but are instead embedded in a multifaceted practice which has for over two decades analyzed the conventions of presentation and representation and assesses the tension between politically engaged and autonomous image production.

De Rooij's weavings are constructed in a relatively reduced amount of colors, formats and sizes – together they form an ever growing syntax or organizing principle. The three weavings shown in Modern Alibis each consist of a mixture of the colors pink, brown and yellow, and the small flower arrangement that complements this suite of works is thought to mimic this particular palette. Bouquet XV is part of a series of visually complex, monumental floral sculptures that began in 2002. On one level these bouquets invite the pleasure of immediate sensory experience, however, the careful selection and grouping of individual blooms can also hint at abstract notions such as diversity, or the relation between the individual and the collective.

Willem de Rooij investigates the production, contextualization and interpretation of images through a variety of media. Appropriations and collaborations are fundamental to De Rooij's artistic method and his projects have stimulated new research in art history and ethnography. De Rooij studied art history at the University of Amsterdam, and art at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie and the Rijksakademie, both in Amsterdam. With Jeroen de Rijke (1970-2006) he represented the Netherlands at the Venice Biennale (2005). Their collaborative works are in the collections of Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), Centre Pompidou (Paris) and MOMA (New York).

Recent solo exhibitions include *"Whiteout"* at Kunstwerke Berlin (2017) and *"Entitled"* at MMK Museum of Modern Art, Frankfurt/Main (2016). Recent group exhibitions include *"Mindful Circulations"* at BDL Museum, Mumbai (2019), *"TRANCE"* at the Aishti Foundation, Beirut (2018), the Jakarta Biennale, Jakarta (2017), *"Suzhou Documents"* at Suzhou Art Museum, Suzhou (2016), 10th Shanghai Biennale, Shanghai (2014) and *"Hollandaise"* at Raw Material Company, Dakar (2013).

De Rooij has taught art worldwide since the late 1990-ies. He is Professor of Fine Art at the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main since 2006, and visiting advisor at the Rijksakademie since 2015. In 2016, he co-founded BPA // Berlin program for artists.