

Press Release - 24 January 2016

Florian Süßmayr

Pictures For German Museums (2)

24.01.16 - 17.04.16

After the computer simulations of John Gerrard and the photographs of Pavel Odvody, the Kunsthalle is expanding its genre-transcending program further. With Florian Süßmayr, a strong painterly position stands at the beginning. If one asks the artist about his models, he explains that he has actually been deeply influenced by film. Süßmayr has himself worked both in front of and behind the camera. His filmic eye is exemplary for a generation of painters whose art is influenced by the moving picture. For that reason, after his solo exhibition "Pictures For German Museums (2)," he will immediately be represented in the thematic exhibition "Painting As Film" (01.05.-24.07.2016).

Florian Süßmayr is an excellent observer. Painters such as Édouard Manet and Gustave Caillebotte already wandered through the urban landscape as Baudelairean promenaders and became "painters of modern life." In contrast to the Impressionists, Süßmayr no longer finds the city to be under the spell of progress. He is interested in marginal sites and themes such as bars, subway stations and toilets. He frequently focuses in an intense close-up on details such as graffiti or a billboard, then switches to a wide shot for a soccer crowd or a punk community. And he loves montage, free collages - which with "Cut Cut" (02.10.2016-05.01.2017) will be at the center of the third and last major exhibition in the new program of the Kunsthalle.

An "anti-idyllic characteristic" (Ulf Poschardt) keeps Süßmayr's pictures at a distance from Romanticism and Impressionism. His paintings tell of feelings and toughness; they are to some extent snottily direct, to some extent atmospherically dense enigmas. They extend from photo-realistic to almost abstract. Surfaces such as cloth, skin, wood, paper, glass or vinyl are well-nigh celebrated. Sometimes the object dissolves into almost abstract compositions which, on the other hand, emphasize the materiality of the oil paints. In the interior of the Munich bar "Geyerwally," an almost Vermeer-like light draws a radiance from the dusty furniture and irregularly tiled floor. So Süßmayr also presents what is beautiful: pictures for German museums.

Süßmayr's works revolve in terms of motifs around the recurrent constants of figure, site and surface. His pictures of bar counters,

waiters' notepads and scribbles on toilet doors and brewery tables resemble marginal notes of urban subculture. These still lifes and interiors, as well as the landscapes and pictures of Beirut, bear witness to human actions when they have already become history. In Süßmayr's oeuvre, the desolate sites and collections of traces are counterpointed by soccer and punk concerts as well as by portrait works. As a shadow or reflection in display windows and panes, the artist himself is increasingly often an integral component of his motifs. In the self-portraits, Süßmayr renders the still observer ultimately visible and, in a subjective twist, increasingly becomes an observer of himself.

Süßmayr's pictures are almost always based on photographic material. They often pass through several stages in various media. Photographs serve as the models for paintings which are then distorted, again photographed, copied, printed as a poster and overpainted or, as wallpapering, become the background for other pictures. In this way, Süßmayr flips through the pages of his own biography. Motifs such as Munich bars, soccer fields or record covers exist in close connection to his time as a young artist and musician in the punk movement in the Munich of the nineteen-eighties and tell of his enthusiasm for soccer and his love of music and film. And painting itself is anchored in his biography. As a young boy, he watched his grandfather paint and later acquired a self-taught facility with brush and canvas.

Since 1999, Süßmayr has participated in national and international exhibitions in Japan, Switzerland, Spain and the USA. He suddenly became known to wide circles through an exhibition at the Haus der Kunst in Munich in 2005. The show entitled "Pictures For German Museums" was followed in 2006 by a same-named catalogue published by the Verlag Walther König in Cologne. The presentation developed in close collaboration with the artist for the Kunsthalle Darmstadt, which will also be followed by a Walther König publication, may be read similarly to the pictures on various levels which flow together in the main hall with a selection of key works. One room is reserved for the theme of music. Created for the Darmstadt exhibition are also new works which continue something that already resonates in Süßmayr's integrated self-portraits. In them, he is concerned with the sublime form of multi-layeredness, which disturbs or even destroys the motif as a representational illusion.

The program which will accompany the exhibition will place music and film in the foreground. Planned for 10.03.2016 is an artist's conversation with the director of the Tate Gallery of Modern Art in London, Chris Dercon.

The exhibition is curated by Dr León Krempel, Curator and Director.

Press Contacts & Images

For press information and for high-resolution images contact presse@kunsthalle-darmstadt.de or call +49(0)6151 891184.