

February 24th
April 28th, 2018Opening
Saturday, February 24th
from 11 am to 9 pm

Beat Zoderer

Dans quelle mesure

press release

Semiose gallery is delighted to present the Swiss artist Beat Zoderer's first Parisian exhibition.

Trained as an architectural draughtsman, Beat Zoderer (b. 1955, in Zurich) began his artistic career in 1979. As an heir to the Concrete Art movement he has since his early years, in a perfectly natural manner, evolved at the heart of Zurich Constructivism following in the distinguished footsteps of Max Bill and Gottfried Honegger. It might however be more accurate to use the term "Zurich De-Constructivism" concerning his work as these historical links have gradually faded as he deconstructs and revitalizes Concrete Art through his subtle undermining of its severity, rationality and perfectionism. Rather than being the result of the application of methodical structures based on repetitive or mathematical systems, each œuvre seems guided by an arbitrary element, a kind of internal logic progressing along a tightrope.

Due to his incessant research, Zoderer's œuvre has progressed through a succession of artistic ruptures justified by his preoccupation with various media. His work on paper begun in the 70s was succeeded in the mid 80s by found objects that the artist disassembled and reconstructed as standing sculptures to be placed in a corner or hung on a wall, their narrative energy remaining intact through the history of the materials and the traces of use they carry. In 1990, his work took a fresh direction through the use of new materials found in DIY and stationary stores.

Beat Zoderer demonstrates a rare agility and inventiveness in the formal solutions brought to each context and his constantly renewed and adapted use of objects, scale, assembly techniques etc. Again in line with "Concrete" principles, materials are never used for their "sentimental" value, only for their intrinsic qualities in terms of shape and color. "The materials always come first¹" the artist states; ordinary materials such as plywood, wool or corrugated iron or articles of stationary, files, plastic sleeves, elastic bands, and labels that Zoderer transports from everyday life to the world of art. He brings together art and life through the application of the principles of the Concrete Art Manifesto: "the artist takes whatever he can find, so long as it contributes to the projection of life, real life.²" However the use of these often depreciated and worthless materials reflects in an ironically critical manner the Concrete artists desire for *Materialgerechtigkeit* or truth to materials.

Beat Zoderer's predilection for a radical mix of art and everyday objects can

¹ All Beat Zoderer's quotes are taken from a conversation with Dorothea Strauss published in *Beat Zoderer: New Tools for Old Attitudes*, Hatje Cantz, Berlin, 2008.

² An extract from the Concrete Art Manifesto edited and signed in 1930 in Paris by Theo Van Doesburg, Otto Gustav Carlsund, Jean Hélion, Leon Tutundjian and Marcel Wantz.

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also be appreciated through his ability to conceive in situ installations, particularly since the mid 90s. For example, his intervention may highlight a particular architectural detail of the exhibition space, or possibly contradict it, or transform the “white cube” into a symphony of shapes and colors; his spatial imagination has also served his reflection on art within the public space with similar success.

It is often the case that the ambivalence engages the spectator both physically and mentally. “From a certain distance my works can be seen as paintings but from close up, you can see that they are made from cheap everyday materials. I go against people’s expectations to keep them aware and attentive; this keeps them in close touch with what really counts.” Using the means of painting to create sculptures and vice versa, the *Penta Objects* play on planarity and constantly demand adjustments in focal length of the spectator’s eye.

Beat Zoderer appreciates the anonymous workmanship behind everyday materials. He insists on a pragmatic approach in which everything must always remain as simple as possible; shapes and colors, materials and intent are reduced to their essence without searching for perfection. “I don’t try to hide how things are done” he states. This is particularly clear with his *Fold and Dip* series: sheets of colored paper are folded and their creases dipped in paint forming a perfectly readable device and chronology. Concerns of sharpness and perfection are of little importance; on the contrary, small irregularities in the given order of things are left for what they are. “If you highlight an error, you transform it into something conceptual. The same is true for materials: they are simply there, I don’t search them out, I just come across them...” Thus, this trust placed in chance, the natural and the unpredictable completes the sensual and organic dimension of his œuvre.

All of Beat Zoderer’s works have a highly intellectual appeal. The spectator is immediately stuck by their invitation to evade conventional points of view. Through a perfect balance between formal radicalism and extravagance, geometry and organic forms, straight and tortuous lines, perfection and the unpredictable, monochrome and multicolored, Beat Zoderer manages with great ease to bring together diametrically opposing formal categories. He resolves seemingly irresolvable contradictions, with a lightness of touch and grace befitting the wisest of minds.

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