

Pavel Büchler - "A pause, more or less long"

11.1. - 15.2.2020; opening 10.1.2020, 6pm

Pavel Büchler can look back meantime over an extensive oeuvre that is characterised by an interesting, indeed quite subversive media diversity, as well as a preference for techniques and tools typical of the modern analogue mass communication. For example, in his text works the artists avails himself of moving type such as used to be used by the book and newspaper printers of the letterpress era, and in his "sound pieces" he integrates antiquated PA loudspeakers or vinyl records. Modernism, with a focus on the period after 1945, is also his point of departure, reference point and resource when it comes to contents and reflections on them, in the narrower sense. For this reason, he also has recourse to existing image, sound, textual and language material from cinema, television and literature. These the artist transforms through minimal interventions while at the same time subjecting them to surprising analyses.

A strikingly large number of Pavel Büchler's works are permeated, like a *leitmotiv*, by something akin to a gesture of rejection. These works are on show in the current exhibition. This is particularly irritating because in these works media technology forms the central point, standing for different culturally-shaped narrative traditions such as cinema or literature, or those serving direct communication, like the bell at a hotel reception desks. The artist has muffled its high ringing sound with a silk bow-tie, while the title he has given that work, *Une fois de plus*, 2015, is the first sentence in Alain Robbe-Grillet's script for *L'année dernière à Marienbad*, a discursive field surrounding the abysmal and destructive impact of manipulated relations between fiction and reality.

Pavel Büchler may use strategies of concept art, a form whose strength and historical topicality consisted of acting self-referentially, while at the same time highlighting art and its social role as such. Yet his carefully considered choice of authors, film passages, sound and text fragments focuses equally on individual human, as well as historical moments that raise fundamental existential questions. Both in *Don't Shoot Him!*, 2018, an audio installation using the brief pause in action that follows the last shot fired in Martin Scorsese's film *Taxi Driver*, and in a pair of prints, *Beckett's Cage*, 2019, whose text "a pause, more or less long" is also the title of the exhibition, the main concern is key moments in modernism, the experiences and impacts of the loss/absence of meaning, orientation and perspective for action, of sense perception and of rational thinking, as well as the loss of common ethical values, when the coordinates that had grounded knowledge and its discourse up till then lose their credibility, in the sense of Michel Foucault.

This also applies to the "New Paintings", 2019, the radicalism of which goes far beyond what Pavel Büchler had done with paintings so far. Here, rules of play that used to be valid are taken uncompromisingly to a zero point, respectively to a point of deflection where habits of perception and reflection are mercilessly ousted from their comfort zone. This includes the failures of his painter-colleagues, who gave him the paintings which, for him, form the point of departure for a complex shaping process: the paint has been scraped off them, pulverised and the resulting dust reapplied to the original canvas in many thin layers. These monochrome paintings lead away from the noise of communicative excess towards a highly charged silence. Finally, through the modernist idea of negation, here negation of the artistic gesture of failure and a new beginning, an attentive gaze is directed at the realities and possibilities emerging in the grey zones.

Elisabeth Gerber

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Recent shows (selection)

2019 *Il Ritmo dello Spazio*, Museo della Grafica, Pisa.

IMAGE (of) SILENCE, National Gallery Prague.

2018 *Sanguine: Luc Tuymans on Baroque*, curated by Luc Tuymans, Fondazione Prada, Milan.

2016 *Confusion of Tongues: Art and the Limits of Language*, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

Quand Fondra la neige, où ira le blanc, Palazzo Fortuny, Venice.

Generosity: On the Art of Giving, The National Gallery, Prague.

Nothing Happens, Twice, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston.

2015 *Last Year at Marienbad: A film as Art*, Kunsthalle Bremen and Rudolfinum, Prague.

Ikon Gallery Birmingham (Solo, cat.)

Time Out: On Lazing about and Doing Nothing, Sprengel Museum, Hannover.

Problem of God, K21/Ständehaus, Düsseldorf.

Awards

The Northern Art Prize, 2010

Paul Hamlyn Foundation Awards for Artists, 2012

Public Collections

Tate Gallery, London, UK; Sprengel Museum, Hannover, D; Concertgebouw Brugge, BE; Fundació la Caixa, Barcelona; Bury Museum and Art Gallery, Bury, UK; The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, UK; NorrlandsOperan, Umeå, S; Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, Antwerp, BE; National Gallery, Prague, CZ; Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds, UK; Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, ES; Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, NL; Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, UK; Neues Museum Westerbürg, Bremen, D; Kunstmuseum Bern, CH; National Museum of Photography, Jindřichuv Hradec, CZ; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tampere, F; Moravian Gallery, Brno, CZ; Albertina, Vienna, AT; The Arts Council of England, London, UK; Museum of Art, Olomouc, CZ; Museum of Applied Arts, Prague, CZ; Czech Museum of Fine Art, Prague, CZ