

BARTHA CONTEMPORARY

PRESS RELEASE

ICONS OF A MODERN AGE

BARTHA CONTEMPORARY'S TEN-YEAR ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION
WITH WORKS BY HENRIK EIBEN CLAY KETTER MIKE MEIRÉ BEAT ZODERER

PRIVATE VIEW SATURDAY JANUARY 23RD FROM 3 TO 5 PM
EXHIBITION ON VIEW UNTIL FEBRUARY 28TH

Bartha Contemporary is delighted to announce the forthcoming exhibition 'Icons of a Modern Age' marking the gallery's tenth anniversary. The installation features works by four gallery artists, Henrik Eiben (Ger. b. 1975), Clay Ketter (Amer. / Swed. b. 1961), Mike Meiré (Ger. b. 1964) and Beat Zoderer (Swiss b. 1955). The private view will take place on Saturday January 23rd from 3 to 5 PM.

Henrik Eiben's multifaceted works are full of deceptions and wilful contradictions. Influenced by American minimalism the artist's paintings, works on paper as well as installations evolve from a reduced vocabulary of predominantly geometric shapes. However their composition is not derived from mathematical systems but instead develops intuitively.

Eiben predominantly works with unorthodox materials mixing fabrics ranging from cheap fake leather to cashmere felts or knitted wool with construction materials as well as applying a variety of painting techniques. His love for fabrics as a medium first began during his studies in the USA. It was then that Eiben decided to work with such a wide variety of materials, each chosen for its ability to serve as a means to accomplish a preconceived idea, rather than for its inherent attributes.

Many of Eiben's pieces at first appear as clearly defined abstract art-works, however on closer inspection their often skilfully hidden sub-context reveals a broader and more nuanced approach to abstraction. The clever interaction between distinctly different mediums as well as highly contrasting colour schemes allow Eiben an artistic freedom, which result in exceptionally engaging works of art.

Clay Ketter was first recognized for his Wall Paintings. They were both strikingly beautiful abstract paintings and fabricated ready-mades, less finished than the wall they were hung on. [Trace Paintings](#) another series of paintings that resemble wall surfaces being redecorated followed. Traces of wallpaper, shelves and electric wiring evoke a sense of uncertainty in the onlooker as to whether this is a real wall or a painting of a wall.

Ketter has continued to produce works at the junctures of architecture, sculpture and painting. The variation between media, including painting, photography and sculpture, establishes layers of complexity but the terse composition of his works are always visually arresting. He falls within an American painterly tradition that started in abstract expressionism and developed into minimalism.

Although the formal aspects are central in Ketter's work, social and human issues are equally important. In his later series these have become more visual. In Gulf Coast Slabs photographic objects show traces of homes swept away by the hurricane Katrina that hit the American Gulf Coast in 2006. The series develop in his aesthetic somewhere between abstraction and realism or even fake ready-mades, both brutal and poetic. The traces of architecture are this time also loaded with morally more difficult content than in his earlier works.

Mike Meiré describes his work as a continued investigation into life's evolutionary processes, which the artist interprets in three phases, birth, biography and death. Central to all of Meiré's work is a delicate interplay between highly refined against mundane everyday materials. The intriguing juxtaposition of organic often sexually explicit or gender-orientated objects with anodyne geometric elements play an increasingly important role in Meiré's work. These evoke a sense of ambivalence towards modernity.

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Within Meiré's continuing work as a creative director, he has for many years navigated and in some cases deliberately trespassed the borders between Advertising, Design and Fine Art. Within this capacity as a designer Meiré's has worked on several installation-based projects, which were commissioned by a variety of commercial companies as subversive means of product placement. However more recently Meiré has clearly defined his practice as an independent artist. As one line of work continues to inform the other Meiré's art-works reveal a profound understanding of popular culture. It is this knowledge, which allows the artist to explore the deep-rooted neuroses that inhibit today's societies and in turn challenge these through his work.

Beat Zoderer early work predominantly consisted of large-scale installations. Assemblages of deconstructed and reconfigured found materials, such as chairs; blinds and ornate picture frames preceded large series many of which works on paper. These were almost obsessively constructed from everyday office materials, such as labels, ring – binders as well as rubber bands. All of Zoderer's works are signified by a playful use of geometry and from the late 80s onwards an increasingly vibrant colour pallet.

Zoderer's works have often been described as referring to Swiss constructivist movements, led by masters such as Max Bill and Paul Lohse. However his unorthodox use of materials and his total disregard for well-planned and structured working processes underline his playful and intuitive approach to his work. His objects are full of visual and conceptual surprises, which go far beyond the somewhat systematic approach by other artists dealing with geometric abstraction. It is within this notion that Zoderer almost never makes studies prior to executing a work. It's the artist's conscious decision not to preconceive works beyond an initial idea prior to executing a piece, affording Zoderer the utmost creative flexibility during the creation process.

Bartha Contemporary was founded in January 2000, first trading from the owners' private home the gallery soon moved to its current location in Notting Hill. Early exhibitions include a survey of Finnish constructivism from the 1970's, an exhibition of printed works by the American minimalist Agnes Martin as well as two group-shows entitled "Minimal Art – Ancient China" + "In Time", which provided contemporary artists the opportunity to juxtapose their work with ancient Chinese objects from the stock of Ben Janssens Oriental Art. More recently the gallery has been instrumental in the publication of Clay Ketter's 'Gulf Coast Slabs Series' a body of photographic works documenting traces of homes swept away by hurricane Katrina. The works from this series were featured as part of the artist's solo-show at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm last summer. In early 2009 the gallery exhibited the works of three masters (Böhm, Leblanc and Staudt) of the Nouvelle Tendance movement a precursor to the Zero and Op-Art movement. This exhibition underlined the galleries continued interest in showcasing both cutting edge work by contemporary artists alongside work from 20th Century art movements, which are largely unknown to a UK audience. The gallery continuously participates at international art-fairs, 2010 these include Art Cologne and The-Solo-Project in Basel.

FORTHCOMING EXHIBITIONS AND FAIRS SPRING - SUMMER 2010

Benjamin Cottam

Private View, Thursday March 4th, Exhibition March 5th to April 25th

Art Cologne

Private View, Tuesday April 20th, Fair April 21st to 25th

Clay Ketter

Private View, Thursday May 13th, Exhibition May 14th to June 27th

The-Solo-Project, Basel

Private View, Wednesday June 16th, Fair June 16th to 20th