

Galerie Neu

Linienstrasse 119abc  
10115 Berlin

Tel.+49 (0)30 285 75 50  
Fax. +49 (0)30 281 00 85  
mail@galerienu.com  
www.galerienu.com

Karl Holmqvist #ESLOHNTSICH 12.02. – 12.03.2016  
Opening 12.02.2016, 6–9 pm

Dadaism, Expressionism, Neue Sachlichkeit and Cubism were the main enemies of Nazi-Germany's cultural politics regarding visual arts. Fighting these art forms, that had already been collected by museums in Dresden, Halle, Berlin and other cities, resulted in a series of exhibitions with the aim of showing what was considered bad, and termed "degenerated art". The most popular of this exhibitions was held in Munich in 1937, in an exhibition called Entartete Kunst, pairing it with an exhibition designed to show what Nazis considered to be real German art. Seen by two Million people in Munich, which made it the far more popular show than the "good" art exhibition, the documents we have today of the Entartete Kunst show consist mainly in a pamphlet produced in parallel and a few black and white photographs of what must have been a colorful exhibition, while the works confiscated in the German museums were later sold or burned.

One of the photographs taken at the preview before the opening shows some Nazi officials in uniform, among them Adolf Hitler, and some civilians, obviously museum staff, in front of what was called the Dada wall. Surrounded by laughing faces one of the uniformed persons is seen pushing Kurt Schwitters *Merzbild*, painted in 1919 and confiscated in Dresden. On the photography it is dangling on one angle, resting on another picture by Paul Klee, out of equilibrium itself. In later photographs, Schwitters painting is straight again albeit hanging upside down.

Karl Holmqvist pointed this out to me, and he wrote: *it was never clear whether this was so (the painting then resulting in the exhibition to be shown upside down) because the nazi organizers wanted to mock the artist or whether they really hadn't understood which way was up.* He concluded on the anti-gravitational qualities of abstract painting, its coherence being based on its formal components, its colour, its composition, which remain intact, even when hung upside down.

In adding this détournement to the painting the Dada wall actually followed a principle that was part of what Dada attempted, to construct an incoherent image out of coherent images, and while leaving the coherent content intact, creating an image that reduced the content to its form. Therefore whatever we may conceive should switch constantly between different layers of perception, that of an abstract formal image, but with an inclusion of intact readable aspects, triggering the wish to read the contents. Readable in this sense doesn't only mean readable as linked to letters and writing, but including letters and writing meant to include elements that prove to stay intact as readable forms with far more consistency. Very coherent forms.

Another element of the Dada wall was the attempt to conceive a mock Dada set up, by including written sentences and a wall painting along with the ubiquitous wall inscriptions, mostly just depicting the prizes at which the pictures were acquired. One of the inscriptions was taken from a poster by George Grosz, reading: *Nehmen Sie Dada ernst! - Es lohnt sich (Take Dada Seriously! - It's worth it.)* Taken from contemporary advertisement slogans,

Galerie Neu

Linienstrasse 119abc  
10115 Berlin

Tel. +49 (0)30 285 75 50  
Fax. +49 (0)30 281 00 85  
mail@galerieneu.com  
www.galerieneu.com

the text printed on a white sheet of paper – the poster as being multiplied and reprinted seen in opposition to the painting – is known from the first Dada fair, held 1929 in Berlin, where it formed part of what is now known as one of the first exhibitions to be conceived as an installation, comprising texts, painting and sculpture to form a spatial collage. Collage and photomontage are recognised as one of the main elements of an art movement that is also associated with men in high hats, and women balancing on spheres reciting abstract poems.

Dada, developed by fugitives of war, can be seen as a “poor” form of art, using whatever comes with the artist, his or her body, his expression, and his tongue. It included a new sort of language, consisting mostly of rhythm and therefore understandable besides of languages. It was developed not only out of necessity in an international context, but it is also perceivable as a means of expression, where the original language was not understood.

Ariane Müller