

BERND KOBERLING Works 1963 – 2017

November 17, 2017 to January 28, 2018

MKM Museum Küppersmühle for Modern Art, Duisburg

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Born in 1938, Bernd Koberling ranks among the most influential figures in the German art scene. He rose to prominence particularly during the 1980s as "co-father" of the so-called "Neue Wilden", whose subjective and expressive visual language stood in opposition to the prevailing highly intellectual and conceptual art of the time. Now the MKM is staging the hitherto most comprehensive retrospective of the works of Bernd Koberling: Some 80 paintings from across six decades of artistic activity attest to the enormous stylistic diversity of his output. Koberling discovered his lifelong theme - landscape - at an early stage in his career, and over the ensuing 50 years has remained true to it, in his continual quest for the quintessence of colour and image.

"Bernd Koberling is an artist who has continually reinvented himself, yet remained true to his life's theme: the landscape as a symbol of human existence. In his painting he gives expression to the universality and timelessness of nature, and embarks upon a journey into eternity, into everywhere and nowhere. At least that is my reading of his work." (Walter Smerling, Director of the MKM)

The exhibition in the MKM reveals Koberling to be both a custodian and innovator of the possibilities in painting in the post-modern era, whose journey into art was described by curator Christian Malycha as follows: *"This is the situation - the immanent threat of nuclear war and the dashed hopes of Modernism - confronting young painters such as Georg Baselitz, K.H. Hödicke, Markus Lüpertz and also Bernd Koberling as they embark upon the quest for their path into art. But beyond these ideological conflicts, each of them is wondering what a 'modern painting' could still be; what, straddling the past and the present, Europe and America, could still constitute their 'own painting'. A genuinely free work, as abstract as it is figurative, which speaks with an unmistakable and unambiguous voice from individual experience. And it is from precisely this mindset that each of these artists succeeded in the early 1960s to fundamentally reinvent paintings for themselves."*

The exhibition is divided into **9 rooms/chapters**: The early ***Fjords and Cabin Paintings*** (1963–1964) were inspired by his frequent trips to the rugged natural environment of the Polar Circle. In his strangely opaque ***Overstretchings*** (1965–1969), Koberling painted landscape elements such as mountains or trees (= permanence), superimposed with a second layer of nettles featuring clouds, sky or horizon (= change), before completing the works with the addition of a final, third layer, comprising semi-transparent plastic foil

or satinated glass. The **Rome Paintings** (1969–1970) were created during a time of crisis for Koberling whilst staying in Rome on a scholarship at the Villa Massimo, and address his own artistic and personal conflicts. Simple, natural motifs and powerful, yet muted colours dominate his **Jute Paintings** (1974–1982), in which the coarse and fibrous material resolves into almost organic structures. **Man and Beast** feature for the first time in his expressive "new wild" works completed between 1982–1987, whereas towards the end of this decade (1988–1990) Koberling shifts focus from the macrocosm to the **Microcosm**. In the years 1990–1998, Koberling begins to investigate colour as an elemental force, relying largely on a dark palette. Almost as a counterpoint, the **Board Paintings** (1999–2011) boast flowing, lightly-applied dabs of colour on a white ground, which lend them the appearance of monumental watercolours. Since 2012, Koberling has returned to painting with oil. The images oscillating between the finely executed web of lines and the dense coloured clouds could be read as the summation of Bernd Koberling's painterly life experience, and – thus breaking the chronology – take centre stage in this retrospective. Four new large-format works have been especially created for the exhibition, and many other paintings are now on view in the MKM, their first ever presentation in a museum.

"If I am accused", Bernd Koberling once remarked, "of not being modern, and of not having arrived in the great city, then as such I am more a kind of a Neanderthal. I have the greatest clarity and the most profound feeling of joy when I am surrounded by nature."

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Curator: Christian Malycha

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Catalogue: Accompanying the exhibition is a comprehensive catalogue, featuring forewords by Thomas A. Lange and Walter Smerling, together with contributions by Demosthenes Davvetas, Kay Heymer and Christian Malycha (264 p., Ger/Eng., 118 col. ill., 35 euro, museum edition, Wienand Verlag, Cologne 2017, ISBN 978-3-86832-402-0).

Illustrated press material: Available for download at: www.stiftungkunst.de/kultur/presse

Accompanying events/guided tours:

January 14, 2018 | 11 am: BERLIN 1965: DIE NEUERFINDUNG DER MALEREI (THE REINVENTION PAINTING)

Matinée – Artists' talks and guided tours of the exhibition with Bernd Koberling (artist), Markus Lüpertz (artist), Christian Malycha (curator), Walter Smerling (Director MKM) | 10 euro, incl. admission

January 24, 2018 | 5 pm: Guided tour: ART APPRECIATION and CULINARY DELIGHTS

21 euro, incl. admission, guided tour, with one beverage and light refreshments

Free guided tours (in German!) of the Bernd Koberling Exhibition are available throughout the duration of the show: Wednesday and Fridays at 5 pm, Saturdays at 3 pm (from November 22, 2017); and on Sundays at 3 pm, there is a tour of both the Exhibition and the collection. Individual tours can also be booked.

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