

**HENRIK EIBEN. *dakar***

18.02.2016 – 28.04.2016

Drawing Room is delighted to present the exhibition *dakar* by Henrik Eiben. New reliefs, works on glass and watercolours by the Hamburg-based artist will be presented. In his works, Eiben deals with formal topics, which are concerned with the definition of image and space in painting and sculpture, examining the medial transitions and forms or states. In doing so, he appropriates specific artistic strategies from Minimal Art, in order to explore the hidden painterly qualities in sculpture and on the other hand the spatial structures in painting and drawing.

At first glance, it seems that Eiben uses a series of artistic approaches and processes taken from Minimalism, such as the use of industrial materials, the reduction of form, serial alignment or the emphasis on the presence of the material. The work is what it is! Less is more! Thus Henrik Eiben's previous work series *dropit*, *Voyager* and the lolly stick works, make formal reference to the reduced formal language of Minimalism. However, the fact that Eiben uses contemporary, lightweight materials such as textiles, polystyrene, wooden lolly sticks or acrylic glass, often combined, frees him of the exorbitant pathos of Minimalism, which often used only one (found, untreated) material and rejected an individual, artistic style. Eiben, on the other hand, contrasts the stringency and clarity of Minimal Art with his own artistic gesture and subtle irony in his compositions.

The wall piece *Bletchley* (2016), presented in the exhibition *dakar*, shows his critical



examination of the key representatives of Minimal Art. The work, consisting of nine steel triangles, of which six are painted in colour, is reminiscent of the flat floor pieces by Carl Andre. While in the case of Andre we can be certain that the work is a sculpture, Eiben's wall piece does not define whether it is a sculpture or perhaps already a painting. In contrast to the Minimalists, who with their strict configuration "force" a particular way of reading on the viewer, in works such as *Bletchley*, every apparently geometric rhythm of the triangles, generated by intentionally

positioned gaps between them and the division by colour into smaller triangles, is broken once again. Here, we have an artist who questions the limits of the genre and extends the pictorial-spatial experience for the viewer, allowing for many different ways of reading.

The three drawings, produced in 2016, entitled *Wash the Day*, *Wolf like me* and *Playhouse*, have been breathed onto the paper intuitively and delicately, demonstrating Eiben's concentration and confident brushwork. In these poetic works on paper, his concept of spatiality in painting and drawing can be easily comprehended.

Eiben is aware of the fact that he is part of a traditional, art-historical lineage and that he draws on this for his work. Yet by taking up the formal language of this lineage and transforming it with small, precise interventions, he gives his seemingly stringent, reduced and calm works a more cheerful note, without ever lapsing into slapstick, and in this way subtly criticises his historical predecessors.



The exhibition title **dakar** is based on the composition of the same name by the legendary jazz saxophonist John Coltrane. His music was an inspiration to Eiben in his studio while working on the new wall pieces and watercolours for our exhibition. Coltrane's stylistic device "sheets of sound", with which compact successions of notes lay around the melody like layers, can be perceived as analogous to Henrik Eiben's spatially multifaceted oeuvre.

**Henrik Eiben** was born in 1975 in Tokyo, Japan, and lived there for a year. After that the family moved to New York for five years and then to Hamburg. He studied from 1997 to 2002 at the Academy of Visual Arts and Design, Enschede, The Netherlands and in 2001 at Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, MD in the US. From 2002 to 2004 Eiben studied in the class of Prof. Silvia Bächli at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Karlsruhe.

**Solo and group exhibitions (selection):**

**2016** NEW POSITIONS, Art Cologne (S), Galerie Christian Lethert, Cologne (S), Galerie Nikolaus Ruzicska, Salzburg (S) **2015** Schwarz Contemporary, Berlin (S), abc, Berlin (G), Neuer Kunstverein Gießen (S), Bartha Contemporary, London (S) **2014** Museum für Moderne Kunst, Weserburg, Bremen (G), gkg Bonn (S), pablo's Birthday, New York (S), Galerie Hein Elferink, Staphorst (S), Kunsthalle Weishaupt, Ulm (G), Drawing Room, Hamburg (G)

Translated by Gillian Morris, Berlin