VAN GRINTEN
DER GALERIE

Marcus Neufanger

Books, Portraits & Vanity Plates

06.09.2014–31.10.2014

In his engagement with the phenomenon of artist personalities and their reception, Neufanger has skimmed off the cream from the sheer unlimited reservoir of his own library of art books. He deploys the books or other photographic material for the motifs of his work. His field is present-day art and his artistic motif is the portrayal of self-portrayal. The basis for his drawings is the photo portraits of artists who currently play a role in the art scene. Whereby the degree of self-dramatization, that is, how an artist lends his person a public image via the media, is the focus. The drawings operate through their writ-large plainness such as the corresponding photos redone in contours that Neufanger supplements with an original comment by the artist. Picture and text enter into a well-deliberated bond, but at the same time each is effective on its own.

In his *Book Covers* and *Vanity Plates* he goes one step further. He reduces the presence of the artist to his mention on the title of a book or relevant exhibition catalogue. Marcus Neufanger carries typography and graphic design over onto canvas so that a handy and

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useful object like a book can unfold its stunning effect when magnified into an abstractly organized plane of fields and letters. It is amazing how a “picture" like a book cover can, by simple enlargement, take on a life of its own. However the pictures first attain full autonomy via their surface transformation in paint, i.e., style and pigment translate into a “genuine painting”. The *Vanity Plates*, that vary greatly in size, ultimately bear only the name of the artist. Epitaphs ordinarily mark the moment when the artist is posthumously accepted into the canon of art history. With Neufanger this kind of memorial plaque lacks dates. The plates are actually a paradox, since most artists whom he portrays as such, enjoy the best of health. In this ironic but trenchant way, the present and the future are locked together.

Marcus Neufanger’s love of, and occupation with, books of artists is on the same level that Hans Ulrich Obrist very aptly characterized in an interview with Franz Erhard Walther:
Books are so important, partly because they travel to the most unlikely places. Much farther than exhibitions. I am also interested in the book as a medium because artists give so much time, passion and energy to them. They are just as important as very big installations.

Marcus Neufanger was born in 1964 and lives in Schwäbisch Hall. His works are represented, among other places, within well-known collections such as ZKM, BW Bank Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Würth Künzelsau, Kienzle Berlin and private German collections.

For the exhibition a German/English catalogue is being published by Stefan Schülke Fine Books, with an additional Collectors‘ Edition of 25 copies.