VAN DER GRINTEN GALERIE



Robert Currie

Material Tension

02.09.2022–29.10.2022

The current exhibition ‘Material Tension’ brings together a group of works created in 2021 and 2022. Robert Currie (*1976, London) had the specific challenges of our gallery space in mind when making his selection, which features a stark element of contrast, the geometric-abstract vis-à-vis the photorealistic-representational.

His work draws on chaos theory, a catch-all for at times opposing views that, however, all share the fundamental idea that order arises from chaos. Currie is also informed by the theory of complexity, which postulates that a sufficient degree of order will always occur and become manifest.

The materials with which Currie works (formerly often video and audio tape, now mainly fine, variously colored nylon threads) are particularly well suited to creating the complex structures that arise from densification and sequencing, which characterize mainly his geometric pieces. The power of these works lies in their austerity, as though large dynamic-chaotic structures have picked a moment of absolute order to come to a complete standstill.

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They radiate an immense aura of contemplation. The artist shows these new black and white and bicolored wall pieces in the middle, cabinet space of the gallery.

A hanging work called the 'Guggenheim Piece' floats in space, acting as a transition to the three-dimensional representational wall pieces in the two white rooms adjoining the center space on either side. The free-hanging piece consists of taut transparent nylon strings, spanned densely at regular intervals. When viewed from a particular distance and angle, the countless miniscule black acrylic paint dots applied to the string 'canvas' reveal an almost photographic image of the interior of the original New York Guggenheim Museum.

Photographs are also the starting point for the new three-dimensional wall pieces, which follow the same principal as the ‚Guggenheim Piece' but are housed in Plexiglas showcases. The new motifs are houses and other buildings situated in evocative landscapes; environments that appear to have once been meaningful and viable until, sometime later, being abandoned. They show no sign of human presence, at any rate. Shades of Edward Hopper and Ed Ruscha.

The two new forest-themed pieces are black and white; the landscapes and building situations (e.g. a nighttime shot of an American gas station) are in color, acrylic paint on transparent nylon strings, with an additional, highly connotative painted image in the background.

Currie's three-dimensional pictures unite dynamics, rhythm and movement, light and space. The artist thus also explores possibilities of physically involving viewers in the visual reception of the works. One must locate and assume the precise position in the space from which the image comes fully into view. The viewer becomes part of a choreography; a dynamic process by which the particles brought to a standstill at that special sweet spot momentarily reveal an image, which is then rendered evanescent by the slightest next move. Here, too, the artist shows an apparent interest in the way bodies of various densities reveal their own breathtaking order within an ossified, equalized or compressed vortex.

Robert Currie studied at the Manchester Metropolitan University and the Royal College of Art in London. His work can be found in numerous collections at home and abroad (Lady De Rothschild, Gottfried Schulz AG, Beth Rudin DeWoody, Defauwes, Simmons & Simmons) as well as in public spaces in Frankfurt, London and Brussels.