VAN GRINTEN
DER GALERIE



Frans Roermond, Lorenzo Pompa, Roy Mordechay

Vor und hinter den Figuren (Before and Behind the Figures)

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Throughout the ages, “modernity” has always triggered wide-ranging debate. One issue, however, remains fundamental: what is, in fact, the picture, and what is the artist? In an early phase of the Modern Art era, when symbolism was on the ascent, the prevailing thought was that the subject of a painting, as in poetry, should be the very essence of things, of the world, should be a likeness thereof. The value and significance of the thing was felt to lie in its unforgettability, its aura, its ability to make sentiments visible, all of which then convenes in the imagination of the viewer to produce something that can be grasped mentally and can also transcend its own physical nature. Not just an object, no: a similitude.

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This type of idealism provoked a dialectical response from the realists, who explicitly favored paintings that were less likeness, allegory or idea and more object. Realists are interested in the thing and not its essential nature.

Even in the fragmented realm of cubism or in wholly abstract painting, the works were still seen as solid entities in a world of things. A dilemma for 20th century art became apparent. In the past it was a given that comparability provided the fundamental basis for the reception/perception of art. But to the same degree as recognition proceeded to depart from the level of pure comparability, painting found itself forced to embrace the elements of memory and sensitivity. A few brushstrokes and voilà: a bundle of asparagus. Not "real" asparagus, rather an analogy thereof. A direct result of increasing freedom, but also in times when paintings become just one among very many things, is that the fundamental system of analogies is also increasingly called into question. And that, in turn, provokes viewers' desire for restoration, purification or readjustment. Like a pendulum swinging to the other extreme. All remain trapped in this paradox.

The four painters presented in the current group show *"Vor und hinter den Figuren"* (Before and Behind the Figures) were carefully curated to create an exhibition that is a dialogue between various outposts within the broad field of "genuine" painting – that is, an expression of the real, immediate personal emotions/perceptions of the artist. They each take what appears to be a clear position within the historical progression described here, each having developed a unique individual language to express it. It follows that these artistic standpoints take figurative painting seriously *as painting* first and foremost. Not only in terms of the wide-ranging formal options it offers for creative expression, but also in its challenging preconditions, which are constantly being reconsidered.

The alliance with Philip Guston, arguably the progenitor of this forthright type of "genuine" painting, is perhaps most apparent here in the work of Lorenzo Pompa. His figures are primary yet complex elements with a streamlined corporal appearance that nonetheless strongly conveys human emotions.

Elements typical of Guston also appear in the painting of Roy Mordechay: segmentation and fragmentation of body parts and a harkening back to painterly discoveries of bygone

eras – in the case of Mordechay to ancient Judea, et al. Frans Roermond's painting is perhaps the most enigmatic, strangely timeless in its constant interspersion of figurative and abstract. The work of Matthias Röhrborn displays most powerfully the collision of mastery of the medium and subversive disruption.

Despite all the differences, each of them is ultimately concerned with the depiction of human beings, whether as a figurative form, or behind one, with ourselves in the foreground or absent.

Painting, it seems, just can't stop after all, and it also can't just stop.

Lorenzo Pompa *(*1962) grew up in Rome where he first studied interior design and architecture before moving to Germany, later studying painting with Georg Herold at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf from 1996 - 2003. He lives and works in Düsseldorf.*

Frans Roermond *(*1967) studied painting in London, Berlin and New York, which since 2017, after long periods abroad, has once again been his home and work base.*

Matthias Röhrborn *(*1968) studied at the Udk Berlin from 1989 - 1996. He lives and works in Berlin and Brandenburg.*

Roy Mordechay *(*1976) was born in Haifa and studied at the Avni Institut of Art and Design in Tel Aviv from 1999 - 2002. He is currently based in Düsseldorf.*