

KATZ CONTEMPORARY

IRRLICHTER

Andreas Walser
with **Guido Baselgia, Ueli Alder, Willy Spiller & Robert B. Käppeli**

28 August - 25 October 2015

Season opening: Thursday, 27 August 2015, from 5.00 pm
Theater performance: Wednesday, 30 September, 7.30 pm

KATZ CONTEMPORARY is pleased to present a group exhibition with works by the late Andreas Walser (*1908 in Chur, Switzerland, † 1930 in Paris, France) in dialogue with four Swiss contemporary artists. The exhibition title *Irrlichter* (Ghost Lights) refers to Andreas Walser's life and work which have been shaped by the desperate search for his own path and a constant shift between a feeling of highest elation and deepest despair while also creating a relation to the contemporary artists who are featured in the show.

Andreas Walser is perhaps still the most famous unknown Swiss artist: His work has been featured in several museum exhibitions and has been discussed in monographs in the last few years, honoring his unusual life before his untimely death. He is a phenomenon in the realm of Swiss art both in terms of his biography and his work: He was born in Chur in 1908 and developed an eager interest in art at a very young age. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner recognized his talent early on and through Augusto Giacometti the 20-year-old made his way to Paris in 1928. While most of his countrymen studied at the academies, Walser dove right into the Parisian art world. Within a very short time span he met the two most extraordinary figures of the avant-garde, Jean Cocteau and Pablo Picasso, who valued and fostered the young Swiss artist. Two of the most important galleries exhibited his work. Life in the big city including excessive drug use ultimately proved to be too much for the young man from Grisons – he passed away in the spring of 1930, just shy of his 22nd birthday, under mysterious circumstances. The result of Walser's short time span in Paris is an impressive body of work. It shows both a highly gifted artist's preoccupation with the contemporary trends in the Paris art world as well as his struggle to find his own expression. His works also show an extremely strong personality in some of the perhaps most surprising works of Swiss art: wonderful, surreal, oscillating worlds of thoughts.

What Paris represented for Walser and his contemporaries in the 1920s, **Willy Spiller** (*1947 in Zurich, lives and works in Zurich, Switzerland) and his generation found in New York in the 1980s. Spiller worked in the world capital as a foreign correspondent for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* for seven years, living at the corner of Broadway and 72nd Street. He photographed what he saw on the subway or in the streets of New York. The results are photographs that depict the most dubious areas and the inner workings of the city that never sleeps, living the American Dream mercilessly and intensely: Images of gripping rawness but also unexpected beauty. Contrasting the New York series are Spiller's photographs of the Swiss Alpine world lit by a full moon.

Ueli Alder (*1979 in Urnäsch, lives and works in Zurich, Switzerland) lives in Zurich but frequently returns to his roots in his work. He takes photographs in his childhood home, the rough landscape of Appenzell, though that only becomes visible at second glance. The

scenery might as well be taken from the Wild West. For this exhibition Alder experimented with alternative photographic processes such as anotypes using old photographs by Andreas Walser as a template. Alder straps them on paper which he has previously dipped in coffee or nicotine (all drugs that Walser was abusing) and then exposes them to sun light until they form a contact print. He also uses cyanotypes which he dyes and colors with the mentioned substances. The result bears a poetic tenderness and melancholia which seem to shine out right from the depth of Andreas Walser's essence.

Guido Baselgias's (*1953 in Engadin, lives and works in Malans, Switzerland) analog black-and-white photography is represented in the exhibition by the four-part polyptychon *Berninamassiv*. Based on the work series to *Light Fall/Falllicht* the theme of his works always moves away from the haptic urgency of the tree line towards the concentration on the elements stone, ice or snow to an abstract reduction and a pure representation of light.

In *Light Fall/Falllicht* the artist has been exploring the celestial mechanics since 2006 and he succeeds in a fascinating way in making visible the course of the sun during equinox (photographed from "Languard", the mountain closest to his home). In other cases he lets the polar night's absent light shine through like ghost lights in the works that are part of the series *Schattenlicht (Shadow Light)*. For his heliogravures Baselgia traveled north, to the Apline highlands and desert regions along the Southern tropic again in 2006 in order to track down elemental forces that manifest in different phenomena.

Robert B. Käppeli's (* 1942 in Lucerne, lives and works in Davos, Switzerland) mostly large formatted drawings depict the Swiss Alps in meticulous, delicate pencil strokes which makes them appear almost photorealistic from a certain distance. At the same time they seem mysterious and unfathomable through Käppeli's use of multiple perspectives in the image. Käppeli's works bear a monumental presence but also open up the view onto microcosmic structures, thus becoming a metaphor for "looking into the interior". They awaken the landscapes which stretch infinitely outwards as well as inwards through their microstructure and invoke the impression of continuity and timelessness.

We would like to invite you to our **theatre performance *Métro zum Höllentor - Andreas Walser und Ernst Ludwig Kirchner* on 30 September at 7.30 pm** starring **Graziella Rossi and Helmut Vogel**.

Stefanie Schneider

For visual material and further information please contact the gallery:

Tel: +41 44 212 22 00 / info@katzcontemporary.com

THEATER PERFORMANCE

Métro zum Höllentor - Andreas Walser und Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

with Graziella Rossi and Helmut Vogel

Concept and stage direction: Heinz Bütler

Wednesday, 30 September, 7.30 pm

Tickets/info: katzcontemporary.com/theater or 044 212 22 00

GALLERY WEEKEND

24 - 25 Oktober, 11.00 am - 7.00 pm