

KATZ CONTEMPORARY

Press release, April 2010

“A.R. Penck / Nino Baumgartner“

Opening 20 April 2010, 6 – 8 pm
21 April – 29 May 2010

We are very pleased to present another established artist together with a young one. **A. R. PENCK** (Ralf Winkler, *1939 in Dresden, DDR) lives and works in Dublin, London, Berlin and Düsseldorf and is among the most renowned artists of our times. The current exhibition features some most recent works from the series *New System Paintings* as well as oil paintings and watercolours from the artist's earlier trend-setting phases. **NINO BAUMGARTNER** (*1979, Bern, CH) lives and works in Zurich. His focus, in the media of sculpture, drawing and performance, is on the material whose immanent energy he unleashes with physical interventions and whose limit he attempts to provoke with his entire strength.

A.R. Penck (*1939 in Dresden) clearly managed to find his own path among the protagonists of the new, figurative and politically stimulated art of the 1980's. Strongly against the then German Democratic Republic, Penck used a technique of large and distinctive brush strokes to express his criticism through painting. Since the end of the 1960's, Penck has developed a personal language made up essentially of symbols and matchstick men that investigates systems of communication and information. Penck's simple forms, which look like graffiti or cave paintings, should work like signs and thus be understandable to everyone. In doing so, the artist wanted his painting to penetrate the viewer's primary instinct. After a time of experimentation, the artist came to international fame with his "Standart-Bilder". In the 1970's, Penck turned towards Neo-expressionism. These works are painted in an intricate manner, with strong accents of colours on large-scale sheets. Staying extensively in Israel, London and Ireland, the artist asserted his creativity not only in painting and sculpture but also in music and composition. In 1984, Penck was invited to the Venice Biennial and participated in the Documenta V–VII (1972–1982). In 2007/2008, the Kunsthalle in Kiel showed a retrospective of his works. The *New System Paintings* are the result of Penck's research on social structures. In his new work cycle, he goes on with the language developed in the 1960's. Behind his expressive, often primitive paintings hide a brilliant conceptual system made of a deep symbolic sign language.

Nino Baumgartner (*1979, Bern) works with natural materials such as wood, brick, glass, paper, water, and metal. His approach derives from the material itself, whose specific natural characteristics constitute the basis for the development of his sculptures. With his own physical strength he achieves the point of highest possible tension in his chosen material, just before the bursting point. And by twisting, bending and breaking it, he sets free unexpected dynamic processes. Baumgartner analyzes the properties of a particular space. He then develops his pieces according to the respective environment. The existence of the figures thus depends on architectonic invariables such as walls, columns, stairs, and windows.

The manner in which Nino Baumgartner approaches the inner force of the materials opens up a field of reference that spans from Carl Andre over Walter de Maria, Eduardo Chillida, Richard Serra to Tatiana Trouvé.

After his intense engagement with untreated plywood, Nino Baumgartner takes his work a step further by using bitumen (a tar-like, viscous mass), lead, brass or copper. In the current exhibition,

the artist uses many different kinds of material that can be found in the gallery. He exposes dust and lead to the same laws, examines the resilience of a wall on a hemisphere and seems to direct the enforcing strength of a column through chipboards impregnated in bitumen in a circle-like movement into the ground. Arches of different metals vary the stress field in the passageway between the gallery spaces, while Baumgartner freezes the force of a glass sheet in ink.

Baumgartner's work in sculpture and performance is a Tango Argentino: he moves within border zones, whereby he always treats the materials with the necessary respect. He challenges the material by straining it to the maximum, provoking it over and over again and thus making noticeable its energetic waves. In his performances, the viewer becomes witness to the breakneck and almost intimate act between the artist and the material. Baumgartner is his own biggest challenger: the limit is defined by confronting the material with his own physical strength.

“A.R. Penck / Nino Baumgartner“, 21 April – 29 May 2010, Opening 20 April 2010, 6 – 8 pm
Opening hours: Tue – Fri 11 am – 6 pm, Sat 12 – 4 pm, or by appointment

EVENTS:

ARTIST PERFORMANCE

Nino Baumgartner

Saturday 29 May 2010, 4 pm

GUIDED TOURS / ART LUNCH

Friday 7 & 28 May, 12.15 pm

Saturday 29 May, 1.00 pm