

Tobias Rehberger

Das Kind muss raus 生

Exhibition in Beijing: 3.5.–6.7.2014

Opening: Saturday, May 3, 2014, 4–7 pm

Galerie Urs Meile is pleased to present Frankfurt-based artist Tobias Rehberger (*1966 in Esslingen, Germany) in his first solo show in China as well as with the gallery. One of the most important German artists of his generation, the 2009 Biennale di Venezia Golden Lion winner regularly straddles the lines between the realms of painting, sculpture, design, architecture, and conceptual art, shaping a body of work that is as dynamic as it is celebrated. These newest pieces, devised by Rehberger especially for Beijing and produced in Beijing and Jingdezhen, collectively act as a specially formulated continuation of his ongoing investigations into spatial awareness, matters of perception, and the everyday made extraordinary. Never one to be constrained by material limitations, Rehberger has added porcelain to his creative arsenal with these newest works.

First of several large-scale works in *Das Kind muss raus 生* is *HOMEAWAY (Oppenheimer Drawings I)*—Rehberger's second reconstruction of his hometown bar of choice for over twenty-five years. A closely related piece, *HOMEAWAY (Oppenheimer Drawings II)*, will be shown in the Encounters sector of Art Basel Hong Kong—a curated selection of large-scale works and installations to take center stage at the show. Born from a gallerist's half-joking quip suggesting that Rehberger take his favorite local hangout with him as he travels, this specific iteration of Frankfurt's Bar Oppenheimer is made primarily from unglazed porcelain. As a result, this relatively porous surface remains, by design susceptible to stains, scratches, and various other marks that Rehberger has affectionately dubbed "memory traces" that will result from this piece's role as a fully operational bar. Featuring a brighter palette than the black, white, and orange dominating the bar's installation in New York's HôtelAmericano in 2013, *HOMEAWAY (Oppenheimer Drawings I)* retains the signature "dazzle" pattern—sets of bold stripes originally used on warships during World War I meant to prevent enemies from ascertaining a vessel's type, speed, location, and heading. Realized in 1:1 scale to the original bar, *HOMEAWAY (Oppenheimer Drawings I)* creates exactly what its title promises—an artist's home away from home. By both modifying the Frankfurt bar's décor and by shifting its location, Rehberger renders the familiar unfamiliar and foregrounds the phenomenological to create not only a visual spectacle, but also an immersive environment. He attests that oftentimes art is not something to stare directly at, but rather something to be experienced—that something behind the viewer can be just as important as what is in front of him/her. In this work, artistry becomes part of the everyday and almost hidden, thus emulating the bold yet unexpectedly subtle dazzle-camouflaged ships not only aesthetically but also conceptually.

Rehberger supplements his visual inquiry into turning the bold invisible with three new pieces—*Dazzle Sculptures Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter, Die Welt kurz vor Erfindung des Tiefen Tellers - 世界在汤盘发明之前*, and *Go away*. In both *Dazzle Sculptures Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter*, sculptures made from paper, and *Go away*, a lamp made from porcelain, the artist has strategically positioned these objects in front of geometric watercolor patterns. As the viewer moves through the gallery space, the objects, although spatially removed from their painted backdrops, fade in and out of visibility as they blend into their surroundings, thus nearly negating the works' initial visual complexity. *Die Welt kurz vor Erfindung des Tiefen Tellers - 世界在汤盘发明之前* functions on a similar basis. This room is covered from floor to ceiling in hand-painted pink and yellow watercolor panels arranged in an illusory tessellated pattern. Placed within the space are three stools and a table that are similarly adorned. Along with the chosen colors, this pattern creates the impression of constant gentle movement. Similarly to the sculptural pairings in *Dazzle Sculptures Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter* and *Go away*, the room's furniture manages to camouflage with their environment.

Closely related to *HOMEAWAY (Oppenheimer Drawings I)* is *HOMEAWAY (Schütte-Lihotzky Drawings)*—Rehberger's porcelain recreation of the iconic Frankfurt kitchen. Designed in 1926 by Viennese architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, this precursor to the modern-day fitted kitchen was created for implementation in low-cost apartments built to ease the Frankfurt housing shortage that had persisted since the end of World War I. Drawing on ideals championed by the Bauhaus and the Deutscher Werkbund,

Schütte-Lihotzky held the principle of basic, function-over-form design in high esteem, making sure that ornamentation was virtually nonexistent in the kitchen. By recreating this innovative and revolutionary design, Rehberger, as in *HOMEAWAY (Oppenheimer Drawings I)*, brings Frankfurt with him as he travels. *HOMEAWAY (Schütte-Lihotzky Drawings)* is painted relatively plainly in accordance with the original plans, showcasing Rehberger's versatility with a departure from the bold visual statements that pervade the exhibition.

The remaining works in the exhibition deal with memory, its material translation, and its physical manifestation. The five porcelain pieces that comprise *xing qi tian ren men bu gong zuo* are all replicas of a teapot owned by Rehberger's family during his childhood. Although the five pieces differ from one another, they are all based on the very same object. To create these slightly varying pieces, Rehberger himself, his mother, his father, his brother, and his daughter each drew the teapot from memory. These drawings were then sent to artisans in Jingdezhen who faithfully recreated them in three dimensions. This interest in memory and the transfer of information is nothing new for Rehberger. Rather it is one that has run through his oeuvre for over twenty years. In 1994, Rehberger created an untitled series of works in which Cameroonian craftsmen created iconic chairs according only to drawings that Rehberger made from memory.

Also dealing with memory are the eleven porcelain bird sculptures *Zippy (1 Year) - Zippy (11 years)* dotted throughout the exhibition. These small sculptures depict a canary that Rehberger received as a gift on his first birthday and lived for eleven years. Depicted in various poses, the unique figurines are based on still photos taken of the bird throughout its life.

A professor since 2001 at Frankfurt's Städelschule, the school he attended from 1987 to 1993 and one of Europe's most prestigious art schools, Rehberger took part in his first exhibition in 1992. Since then, he has had solo exhibitions at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands (2008); Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany (2008); Fondazione Prada, Milan, Italy (2007); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain (2005); Whitechapel Gallery, London, England (2004); and Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2002). Most recently in 2014, the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt hosted an extensive exhibition of Rehberger's work that will go on to travel to Rome's MAXXI. He has also presented at the Gwangju Biennial, Gwangju, South Korea (2012); Manifesta 1 in Rotterdam, the Netherlands (1996) and 2, Luxembourg (1998); and the Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (1997, 2003 and 2009). In 2009, he was awarded the Golden Lion for best artist for his installation *Was Du liebst, bringt dich auch zum weinen* at the Palazzo delle Esposizione at the Venice Biennale. Other awards include the Otto-Dix-Preis (2001) and the Hans-Thoma-Preis in 2009.