

Wälchli & Reichlin (Chalet5)

*AN EYE ON TWO WORLDS*

Galerie Mark Müller, Zurich

28 October 2016 to 7 January 2017

Karin Wälchli and Guido Reichlin have been working together as an artist duo under the name of Chalet5 since 1995. Using a variety of media, they have produced a multifaceted oeuvre. While in the past their focus was mainly on installations and collage-like processed photographs, they have increasingly dedicated themselves to painting lately. The intellectual and creative source, however, from which they draw their inspiration, has remained largely unchanged. Their pictures and objects are predominantly composed of ornamental patterns and structures from various cultures. They are placed side by side or are arranged so as to transparently overlap in order to re-question one's own point of view in dealing with what is 'unfamiliar' from an unaccustomed position.

Their current exhibition *An Eye on Two Worlds* at Galerie Mark Müller in Zurich presents a series of new paintings by Chalet5. The exhibition title seems to be programmatic: a new pictorial world unfolds before our very eyes. What do we see? And above all how do we see? They show pictures that question our visual conventions and our knowledge of the world. Do we see what we see or do we see what we know or what we recognize? How do we deal with unfamiliar forms and structures?

We see compositions with a strongly reduced color range consisting mainly of a multitude of nuanced shades of black on white ground. The pictures irritate as they display neither purely figurative nor entirely abstract characteristics. They seem to be hybrid-like structures uniting elements of both figurative and abstract pictorial worlds. From a distance one thinks to discern at least tactile/material certainties. Some of the fragments appear almost photorealistic, graphically detailed and remind of something that has naturally grown, a plant, a mineral, an anthropomorph shape, a liquid flow, an industrial product or a substance that combines in an endless row of folds. However, the close-up view reveals that the viewer's eyes have been deceived.

The spatial, corporeal, voluminous impression as perceived from a distance turns out to be produced by completely flat layers of color. The relation between object and pictorial ground and the impression of an at least rudimentary spatial perspective are turned upside down.

The white background and the painted object seem to be on the same level. The viewers have to reposition themselves, since all they know about the sensuous/tactile qualities or material properties of the surface does not work with these pictures.

The paintings by Chalet5 activate the viewer's associative perception and imagination. Thus they address an independent viewer who is ready to engage with new and unknown pictorial worlds. With their entirely artificial paintings Wälchli & Reichlin question our way of perceiving the world we live in, a world characterized by and saturated with a variety of images. Subliminally they thematize the consequences resulting from passive viewing and a lack of critical viewing.

Dr. Invar-Torre Hollaus – Basel, December 2016