
Philipp von Rosen Galerie

Walter Dahn

Moving Forward in Reverse. Painting on Paper 1972-2015

Opening: January 15, 2016 at 7 pm

Exhibition from January 16 through February 20, 2016

We are proud to inaugurate – after shows in 2010 and 2012 – on January 15, 2016 with *Moving Forward in Reverse. Painting on Paper 1972-2015* our third exhibition with works by Walter Dahn (*1954, lives and works in Cologne).

While earlier we had mainly been showing photographs, we now exhibit paintings on paper, that is: watercolors on recycled paper, on stationery, on reverse sides of found papers: flyers, wrappings, envelopes and other used material. Walter Dahn uses such material (instead of pre-fabricated paper), because found papers work better, they do not suck in the colors, for instance. Content-wise the small works deal with the human being, his housing, the landscapes in which he lives, the objects that he deals with. No clear statements can be expected but rather painted poems, atmospheres, vibes, that can be understood and experienced, but must not necessarily be analyzed.

Comparable works on paper have been collected by the following institutions: Print Department of the Kunstmuseum Basel, Museum for Modern Art, Frankfurt am Main, Museum Weserburg Bremen, Museum Ludwig Cologne, Collection Ringier Switzerland Dahn, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.

Regarding his watercolors Dahn explains as follows:

"Some of the sheets date back to the time when I was still a student under Joseph Beuys. This marked the start of a continuity that has lasted to this day. From the early summer of 2015 a number of older themes have been re-addressed, while at the same time it seemed necessary to rework many earlier things. During the inspection process, this and that landed in the wastepaper basket...

Then as before, certain works by fellow-students dating from the 1970s came across to me quite clearly. They definitely had an influence on my work, then as now. It is often the case that one only moves forward by looking backwards. Hence perhaps the somewhat curious title of this show."

On Saturday, February 13, at 2 pm we will present an eponymous monograph documenting the exhibited works (published by Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Cologne). We will advertise this event separately; however, you are warmly invited already now. The book is accomplished by poems Walter Dahn found in the estate of his late mother Helene Dahn.

With regards to these poems he writes:

"I presume that my mother Helene 'Leni' Dahn only began in the last 20 years of her life to write seriously. When she died in the summer of 2015, her papers were found to include short stories, poems, observations and memoirs.

Then, when looking through the material bequeathed to my sisters and me, I was amazed. But only when reading and re-reading it did I really become aware of its quality. I am talking of this extreme modesty, her warmth, her simplicity and clarity, and also her aloofness. All these were qualities which she displayed in everyday life and with which she impressed almost everyone she met.

Following her sudden death, I realized that at last I now had to bring to fruition a long-hatched project to combine her writings and my watercolours in a single book. It is clear that this can only be a small, very personal selection from a great treasure house. It should also be clear that everything here is intended to stand in juxtaposition, and not as mutual illustration. If in spite of this anyone feels moved to discern finer and more profound connexions, please go ahead!

And so I dedicate this book entirely and in deeply felt gratitude to the memory of my mother Leni Dahn.”

We are very grateful for the cooperation with Sprüth Magers, Berlin, London, Los Angeles.

For further information and/or images please contact the gallery.