

PRESS INFORMATION**LIVING IN THE MATERIAL WORLD****Materiality in Contemporary Art**

Lara Almarcegui, Michael Beutler, Karla Black, Berta Fischer, Theaster Gates, Ane Mette Hol, Jessica Jackson Hutchins, David Jablonowski, Markus Karstieß, Alicja Kwade, Marie Lund, Oscar Tuazon

December 6, 2014 – February 15, 2015

Press conference: December 4, 2014, 10 am

Opening: Friday, December 5, 2014, 7 pm

What material does an artist select, and for what reasons? The international group exhibition *Living in the Material World* examines the role of materials in contemporary art. The aspect of materiality has again come to represent a key concept for a young generation of artists today.

In the 1960s the definition of art was expanded radically due to the questioning and re-evaluation of various materials. However, the possibilities of digital technology led to a reduction in the importance of concrete materials at the end of the 20th century. In contemporary art the aspect of materiality is being addressed once more against the background of current social and cultural developments, and is even being elaborated further, and transformed. The twelve artists invited to participate in the exhibition focus on the characteristics and narrative potential of such diverse materials as concrete, wood, ceramics, glass, plastic or paper. They take up artisanal traditions and industrial production methods, are occupied with recycling and do-it-yourself, devote themselves to material analysis and the reconstruction of specific places and objects, or develop fragile architectonic constructions.

Catalogue***Living in the Material World***

With texts (Germ./Engl.) by Andrea Brauckmann, Julia Brennacher, Lotte Dinse, Beate Ermacora, Susanne Figner, Robert Fleck, Sylvia Martin, Gunnar Schmidt and Jürgen Tabor
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Artist's Talk

Thursday, January 22, 2015, 7 pm

Michael Beutler in conversation with Beate Ermacora

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In her works **Lara Almarcegui** (*1972 in Saragossa, lives and works in Rotterdam) is concerned with materials as representative of our constructed urban environment. Employing a form of analytical stock-taking, she dismantles buildings into their material components. In the Galerie im Taxispalais she is showing a specially created work: a wall text listing the materials used for the construction of the rooms with information about their respective weights. This creates a field of tension between the architectural space we are able to experience and the conceptual and quantitative denotation of the building materials, which remains ultimately abstract for the visitor despite all the detail provided.

Michael Beutler (*1976 in Oldenburg, lives and works in Berlin) visualises production processes by constructing his own machines, which turn cheap and sometimes recycled materials such as cardboard, tin, foils, remnants of fabric or old paper into sculptural constellations. As the machines and their products stand side by side within the exhibition space, on an equal basis, they point to both creative and artisanal production processes as well as to their reciprocal influences. At the same time, with this artistic strategy Beutler reflects on industrial production as such.

The pastel-coloured, space-consuming sculptures by **Karla Black** (*1972 in Alexandria/Scotland, lives and works in Glasgow) hang from the ceiling or spread across the floor; their effect is both artificial and child-like, they are as repulsive as they are enticing. She uses materials such as construction papers, pastel chalks, eye shadow, lipstick or face powder, the cosmetics being employed not because of their connotations with femininity but because of their haptic quality. The works' light, fragile and contingent effect is developed in a very precise working process between construction and deconstruction.

Berta Fischer (*1973 in Düsseldorf, lives and works in Berlin) makes brightly-coloured plastic forms from acrylic glass, which suggest the crystallisation of complex sequences of movement through their expressive dynamics. The starting material is industrially prefabricated, coloured transparent panes of acrylic glass, from which she lasers forms, which she subsequently heats and models into abstract polymorphous objects. The spatial dimension of the works is supplemented by the highly light-reflecting, cut edges of the acrylic glass pieces, which are accentuated as gleaming drawings and so add a linear motif to the plastic volumes. The varying light situation and viewing perspectives play a part in creating the objects' constantly changing appearance.

Having trained as a ceramic artist, urban planner and theologian, **Theaster Gates** (*1973 in Chicago, lives and works in Chicago) is dedicated to an artistic practice that not only analyses society, but also intervenes directly into social and socio-political processes. His sculptures and objects are always to be seen in the context of his special participatory concept of art and the artwork. While they are initially seductive as a consequence of their material aesthetics, later they begin to open doors to cultural spaces and situations. He often employs used, discarded materials, whereby he aims not only to point out their re-usability but also to show that they are carriers of history and knowledge.

The work of **Ane Mette Hol** (*1979 in Bodø, lives and works in Oslo) focuses on the relationship between the original and the reproduction. Many of her works resemble used or casually abandoned working materials. Only when we look very carefully do we see that the used piece of masking paper or packaging is in reality a drawing meticulously produced by hand and formed into three-dimensional objects. This revaluation and upgrading of secondary objects through a time-consuming process of reproduction allows Hol to raise questions linked to the systems of both art and consumer culture: How are values generated? What are the relations between original and reproduction? What mechanisms and conventions are our perceptions based upon?

Jessica Jackson Hutchins (*1971 in Chicago, lives and works in Portland/Oregon) sees the process, the material and the objects in her work as parts of a system of interpretation that she offers to the viewer. When she selects the materials for a work she attempts to take into account every story and meaning that they could conceivably represent. Found items of furniture and functional objects are set into dialogue with organic-abstract forms, so that characteristics like soft and hard, rough and smooth, heavy and light, matt and shining are contrasted directly. Often she makes reference to the original function of the everyday objects used and exaggerates them, for example – in the work *Venus* (2013) – by giving a sawn-through sofa a novel function as a pedestal.

In his objects, arrangements and installations **David Jablonowski** (*1982 in Bochum, lives and works in Amsterdam) researches sculptural phenomena from the standpoint of materials and materiality as bearers of meaning. Essential aspects of his work are the questions of what material development's technological innovations and new trends may signify from a sculptural viewpoint, and what new aesthetic forms and communication potentials they provide for artistic debate. In this context, he traces changes in sculptural aesthetics over a long period of time, as they develop increasingly from the firm, voluminous, permanent and analogue towards the fleeting, superficial, immaterial and digital.

In his work with clay, **Markus Karstieß** (*1971 in Haan/Rhineland, lives and works in Düsseldorf) deliberately seeks an affinity to artisanal practices, which hark back to a tradition of thousands of years. For the installation *Boxes* (2013/14) he filled several as yet unfired clay boxes with remnants of glaze, splinters of glass, or refuse from parties and household rubbish. The subsequent firing process triggered reactions in the materials, which could be controlled only to a certain extent by means of the temperature settings. The objects created in this way reveal a seemingly alchemist metamorphosis: shining and rough surfaces, iridescent colours, inclusions and cracks, transparent and opaque layers create the snapshot of a material transformation.

In her works **Alicja Kwade** (*1979 in Kattowitz, lives and works in Berlin) examines the way in which materials are given a cultural attribution through their usage. Here, she does not aim to give the material a fresh meaning but to clarify the existing symbolism or to break it by means of an unusual context, thus underlining or questioning the viewer's expectancies regarding the materials of our environment. Often it is a matter of how values are generated, as in the work *Annahme falscher Eigenschaften* (*Assumption of False Characteristics*, 2012). Two briquettes – one made of coal, the other covered in gold – lie next to each other on a pedestal beneath a glass case. A pane of glass between the two objects creates reflections, projecting the image of each briquette onto its counterpart.

Marie Lund (*1976 in Copenhagen, lives and works in London) is interested in the material qualities of everyday objects, and this is a central aspect of her work. She manipulates, changes and arranges found objects to visualise forms and features in them that are diametrically opposed to the way in which they are traditionally perceived and function. For example, she produces concrete casts of trouser legs, or she carves into the faces of wooden busts to the point where they become unrecognisable. Her interventions into the state of objects enable her to playfully dispel supposed contradictions like volume and surface, representation and abstraction, construction and destruction.

Oscar Tuazon (*1975 in Seattle, lives and works in Paris and Tacoma/Washington) creates works that oscillate between architecture and sculpture because of their mode of construction and materiality. Shaped by the American tradition of DIY architecture, they undermine – with their interest in simple and cheap materials, some even found abandoned on the streets – the superficial reference to Minimal Art. The emphasis on the rough and physical in his archaic and at the same time apparently technoid constructions made from wood, concrete and metal expunges any notion that the material could show and represent anything other than itself: a simple, tangible materiality lies at the heart of his works.