

Udo Lefin

Paintings and Drawings 1983-1992

6 February - 4 April 2015

The first exhibition by Udo Lefin took place in my apartment on Vorgebirgsstraße in Cologne. After a lot of convincing, the artist agreed to exhibit a two-part lacquer painting there. The painting showed enlarged depictions of various mushrooms, a beetle, as well as a digital display: E1 C1. "Tempo" is the title of this work that now, thirty years later, returns to be seen in our gallery again. An earthly cosmos of life reveals itself to the viewer, stages of becoming and passing, brought to a lucid plasticity by up to 40 layers of undiluted color pigment.

"Tempo" is also a term from the world of chess: E1 C1, the last defensive move. The mushrooms portrayed are psilocybin teonanacatl. The Aztecs called this mushroom "Flesh of the Gods". Albert Hofmann, discoverer of LSD, set the hypothesis that certain patterns and ornaments of pre-Columbian cultures refer to this species of mushroom.

"¿Cuántas ventanas tiene tu casa?" (How many windows does your house have?) is the title of a painting in my second Udo Lefin exhibition from 1988. This painting recalls the famous etching by Goya "El Sueno de la razón produce monstruos" (The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters), in which the artist has also layed his head down upon the table and dreams. How many possessions, how many insights does a man need, or what does the artist want to reveal to us?

The painting of a Torero (untitled, 1987, signed 1988) shows Lefin's virtuosic use of lacquer on various materials, in this case a plastic table cover. Above the head of the Matador, a gestural movement is implied, which could be read as Aeu or as A W. During the night that the painting was finished, Andy Warhol passed away.

The painting "Original und Fälschung" ("Original and Forgery") from 1983 is from the estate of Sigmar Polke and depicts the monstrous Nazi General Field Marshal Otto Moritz Walter. Udo Lefin conceived the painting as homage to Francis Picabia's famous painting "La Nuit Espagnole".

Udo Lefin's special way of painting connected traditional subjects and techniques with contemporary elements (digital symbols and typography) as early as the 80's and early 90's. His enigmatic works seem on one hand to call for a decoding of secret messages, and on the other hand to conclude on their own with their intensive surface shine. And so they allow differing interpretations. Reoccurring themes are transience, rituals, crossing boundaries, the paranormal, as well as the interaction between the visible and hidden. The frequent use of quotes in Lefin's work also indicate various directions (for example, "Don't decide" or "A golden age is coming").

Daniel Buchholz