

Michael Krebber (*1954 in Cologne, lives in New York) has been leading a double life as a rumor for many years. He fostered this iridescence by exhibiting little or nothing. From a certain moment onward, the painter showed a bit more, but it was always about how much an artist ought to display. The scene of this critical self-staging as an actor of art was 1990s Cologne. On account of this prelude, it was for a long time difficult to distinguish Michael Krebber's activities from what was said, purported, or speculated about him. For many young artists in Europe and the United States, Krebber offers a projection screen that can hardly be overestimated. While little known to the general public, many traits of MK, who repeatedly sheds his skin, are negotiated within the art world. People actually work things through with him in mind.

The Living Wedge, organized in cooperation with the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, Porto, presents a comprehensive selection of the artist's works since the 1980s for the first time in Switzerland. The show is thus a culminating point of the Kunsthalle Bern's program line that puts the meaning of painting for the present and future of art up for debate.

Unfolded in its richness, the rumor Krebber is surprising in view of many things that have been claimed about him. It is often said that what Mr. Krebber does is painting about painting. The exhibition expands this fixed ascription in different lines of flight. What certainly plays a crucial role is the reflection on frames, spaces, and borders, but also on the forms of relation within the painted picture and between the picture and other pictures. Borders appear soft and are more like transitions; an array of possibilities of how an artist can relate to his environment becomes conceivable. Krebber's environment is the system of art, with the real penetrating this order time and again. The penetration of life does not remain formless, it bores like a delicate thorn into the flesh. The process appears strangely undramatic, no injuries occur, as if a cunning trick had taken effect. A certain coolness characterizes the profane magic of these processes. As a viewer, one sometimes feels a bit short-changed. One is astonished at how much is conjured from almost nothing, and how it catches the eye. In other words, it is a balancing act on the fine line between a multitude of possibilities and the point where it works only in this and no other way. *The Living Wedge* maneuvers along this fine line. The movement of the wedge is necessitated by the circumstances. Krebber always also has art's entire set of rules in mind, while simultaneously making the rules himself by overachieving, or also reinterpreting, the given conventions in a highly idiosyncratic way. What then appears as a shifted version are flexible rules. Suddenly, another rule applies, and then yet another rule must apply, because it doesn't work without rules.

Michael Krebber does not pander to anything, he doesn't let himself be defined, he acts in a controlled manner, while remaining unpredictable. His means, his lines and spots, are often sparse

and expansive at the same time. He is an artist torn between economizing and wasting. He succeeds in achieving the maximum with the least effort, without one being able to say what purpose this acumen serves. Perhaps what we have here is someone who gambles for the highest stakes in deferring the unknown, thus keeping the possibility of an open ending in suspense. The word “hesitating” has repeatedly been used for his artistic moves. Something is delayed, shimmers in provisionality and indeterminacy, so that a space of expectation can unfold. Yet the reason for this action could also lie in the self-referential desire to be surprised by oneself, and also to uphold one of the greatest potentials of art: the outcome of a movement that cannot be foreseen, the search that does not know where it will arrive.

Works by Michael Krebber (born 1954 in Cologne, lives in New York) have been presented at Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, Porto (2016), Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin (2015), Museum Brandhorst, Munich (2015), MUMOK, Vienna (2015), Greene Naftali, New York (2015), Maureen Paley, London (2015), Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2015), Halle für Kunst Lüneburg (2014), dépendance, Brussels (2013), CAPC musée d’art contemporain de Bordeaux (2012), Real Fine Arts, New York (2011), Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne (2008), Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris (2007), Sammlung Grässlin, St. Georgen (2006), Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht (2006), Secession, Vienna (2005), Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles (2005), The Top Room, London (2001), Kunstverein Braunschweig/Städtische Galerie Wolfsburg (2000), Galerie Ascan Crone, Hamburg (1998), Villa Arson, Nice (1997), Musée d’art moderne et contemporain, Geneva (1995), further exhibitions at Galerie Bleich-Rossi, Graz, Christian Nagel, Cologne, Bruno Brunnet Fine Arts, Berlin und Fettstrasse 7a, Hamburg/Zurich.

This exhibition is organized in collaboration with Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, Porto.

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