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Peter Schuyff
Has Been
Ground floor & 1st floor

Anne Sylvie Henchoz
Tempo on island-surfaces
Screening room
The exhibition *Has Been* of Peter Schuyff is supported by:

Banque Cantonale de Fribourg

Mondriaan Fund

Sorry We’re Closed, Bruxelles

This exhibition is organised in partnership with Le Consortium, Dijon

Peter Schuyff
Limited edition

*Nurses, 2015*
50,5 x 40.8 cm

Edition of 40

Edition for the support of Fri Art
Has Been presents a selection of works produced between 1981 and 1991 by Dutch painter Peter Schuyff, who was born in Baarn, Netherlands, 1958. This solo exhibition, organised jointly by Fri Art, a contemporary art centre in Fribourg and Le Consortium, in Dijon, presents work produced by the painter in New York in the 1980s and is the very first retrospective of his early career. The exhibition focuses on three different groups of works: acrylics on “biomorphic” canvases, typical of his early work (1982 – 1984), an important selection of abstract compositions (1984-1988) also on acrylic, and a large group of works on paper spanning an entire decade (1981-1991).

While these groups may not appear to have anything in common, they all have a role to play in multiple histories abstraction. Although this particular artistic vocabulary appeared to be exhausted in the 1980s, Schuyff, among other artists of the time, brought it back to life and re-appropriated its visual codes. He combined this takeover with classical, pre-Modern painting techniques and the creation of the illusion of light. He thus created compositions which captivate as much by their visual impact as by the complexity of their referential relationships.

Several works in the main room on the Ground Floor comprise geometric grids with colour gradients and chiaroscuro succeeding each other. At one and the same time, the grid highlights the flatness of the canvas and gives the pattern intense optical depth. The construction lines in grey pencil and the splashes of paint that the artist leaves exposed allow him to demystify the use of classical techniques of illusionism by appointing up the flatness of the surface of the painting and its constituents (canvas, paint, surface). The particular strength of Schuyff’s works resides in the visual resolution of these contradictions (illusion of depth versus flatness of the canvas).

Furthermore, his artistic expertise is particularly in evidence in the way he handles geometric surfaces and in his acrylics which combine neo-surrealism with abstract images, which can be seen on the First Floor.
Here it is not so much the rigidity of the grid but the exaggeration, almost ad absurdum, of abstract phenomena, through the choice of colours and biomorphic shapes reminiscent of late surrealism, which provide the visual attraction and reveal the painter's subtle sense of humour.

This humour is a counterpoint to pure geometric rigour. It can also be perceived in his works – which can be viewed in the back gallery of the Ground Floor – composed of imprecise, ghostly rectangles, barely sketched on a minimalist background in poorly pigmented colours. This playing around with the physical possibilities of colour, through transparency or density, can be traced right throughout his work.

The First Floor also contains a group of 84 works on paper, produced between 1981 and 1991, and exhibited in its entirety (200 items) at the Sperone Westwater Gallery in New York in February 1992. These works include the easily recognisable illusionist series of gouache on found drawings. These works show the artist's development in a considerably more complex and multiple light. In these works, the trompe-l'œil effect expands to become actual plasticity and creates boundaries between abstract and figurative art. By painting on original drawings found in flea markets, Schuyff takes a fresh look at the pictorial space of the works and raises new questions about the value and physical nature of these compositions.

Schuyff's work does not clearly fit into a particular style or movement, and yet his artistic development is closely linked to the 1980s New York scene. These different groups of works which were produced over this exceptional decade, when Manhattan was in a period of intense artistic ferment and where, in the space of a very few years, a dynamic artistic scene grew up in East Village, a district which set itself up as an alternative to the Reaganite ideals of urban American society. While there were very few galleries and art spaces in East Village in 1981-1982, just five years later there were over one hundred.

This decade was marked by a plurality of styles. One movement drove out the next (Neo-Surrealism, Neo-Geo, Neoexpressionism, Appropriation, etc.), they overlapped each other, contradicted each other and were lauded or criticised by turns.

Anne Sylvie Henchoz was born in Geneva 1977. She lives and works in Lausanne. She graduated from the HEAD in Geneva and teaches video at eikon Fribourg (Applied Arts School). She has participated in the following exhibitions: No local, no global, in Wallriss in 2013; and Manifesta 11, Zurich, in 2016. In 2015, she won a Swiss CVC artist residency in Cairo.

Anne Sylvie Henchoz brings together a trio of women drummers for her new film, Tempo on Island-Surfaces, to create a sensual, rhythmical choreography played out in various "musical landscapes" created by the postures and movements of the musicians. The piece is composed of a basic tempo to which solos are added one at a time. The musical instrument is the body and the women transgress its limits by exploring the sounds produced when their percussive hands strike their bellies, the hollows of the cheeks or the ground on which they stand. Each has a different way of drumming and this can be seen in the bodily energy generated during their performance. Close-ups and shots that spin around the drummers highlight the texture of the rhythms, the rustling of the sequins on the fabric and the internal resonance offered by their legs when their feet strike down.

The film offers an invitation to play by redefining, through rhythm, sound and movement, the ways in which we occupy space.

Anne Sylvie Henchoz
Tempo on Island-Surfaces, 2017
3’40”
The artistic movements of the time were much like an ideological minefield for young artists, and particularly painters. While conservative artistic circles and the market welcomed the return of modernist painting (via, for example, Neo-Expressionism and the Transavantgarde), others, under the influence of post-modernist theories, feminism and French poststructuralist writings, reproach this movement for not being sufficiently critical and for being too commercial. Schuyff’s work distances itself in a particular way from the seriousness of these discussions and from ideological battles. In a way, it is expressly linked to the history of painting as a specific medium.

Today, thirty years later, although the ardour of these debates has waned somewhat, when we look back at this period we can re-evaluate this history in a whole new light. The medium of painting is perpetually brought into question and attempts are constantly made to circumscribe and map this field (see recent exhibitions such as “Painting 2.0: Expression in the Information Age”, Museum Brandhorst, Munich, 14 November 2015 - 30 April 2016 and “Fast Forward, Painting from the 80s”, Whitney Museum, New York, 27 January – 14 May 2017). Notwithstanding, Schuyff’s approach to painting is all the more contemporary as it is alternative and stands both as an argument for and a counterargument to these debates both past and present.

From 1983, Peter Schuyff was represented by the Pat Hearn Gallery in New York. In 1987, he was exhibited for the first time in Switzerland in Geneva at the Centre d’art contemporain (CAC), and in Germany at the Galerie Paul Maenze in Cologne. In the 1990s, he was exhibited at venues including the Gian Enzo Sperone Gallery in Rome, at Sperone Westwater and at the Tony Shafrazi Gallery in New York. He is currently represented by the following galleries: Sorry We’re Closed in Brussels; Galerie Gabriel Rolt, in Amsterdam, Mary Boone Gallery, in New York, Galerie Karl Pfefferle, in Munich and Studio Raffaelli, in Trento. In 2014 he was part of the Whitney Biennial in New York City.

Works on exhibition

1. Peter Schuyff
   Untitled, 1985
   Acrylic on linen
   230 x 167 cm
   Courtesy Sorry We're Closed, Bruxelles

2. Peter Schuyff
   Untitled, 1985-86
   Acrylic on linen
   230 x 167 cm
   Courtesy Sorry We're Closed, Bruxelles

3. Peter Schuyff
   Untitled, 1984-85
   Acrylic on linen
   230 x 167 cm
   Courtesy Sorry We're Closed, Bruxelles

4. Peter Schuyff
   Various sizes
   Gian Enzo Sperone

5. Peter Schuyff
   Untitled, 1983
   Acrylic on paper mounted on canvas
   152,5 x 203 cm
   Courtesy Sorry We're Closed, Bruxelles

6. Peter Schuyff
   Untitled, 1983
   Acrylic on paper mounted on canvas
   178 x 140 cm
   Courtesy Sorry We're Closed, Bruxelles
|   | 1. Peter Schuyff  
Untitled, 1986  
Acrylic on linen  
304.8 x 304.8 cm  
Collection Pierre Huber |
|---|---|
|   | 2. Peter Schuyff  
Untitled, 1987  
Acrylic on linen  
230 x 167 cm  
Courtesy of the artist |
|   | 3. Peter Schuyff  
Blackjack, 1987  
Acrylic on linen  
190 x 190 cm  
Courtesy of the artist |
|   | 4. Peter Schuyff  
Untitled, 1987  
Acrylic on linen  
190 x 190 cm  
Courtesy Sorry We're Closed, Bruxelles |
|   | 5. Peter Schuyff  
Untitled, 1987  
Acrylic on linen  
190 x 190 cm  
The Gerard L. Cafesjian Collection |
|   | 6. Peter Schuyff  
Sol Lewitt, 1987  
Acrylic on linen  
190 x 190 cm  
Courtesy of the artist |
|   | 7. Peter Schuyff  
Untitled, 1987  
Acrylic on linen  
190 x 190 cm  
Courtesy of the artist |
|   | 8. Peter Schuyff  
Superstar, 1987  
Acrylic on linen  
230 x 167 cm  
Courtesy of the artist |
|   | 9. Peter Schuyff  
Untitled, 1987  
Acrylic on linen  
295 x 150 cm  
Courtesy Sorry We're Closed, Bruxelles |
|   | 10. Peter Schuyff  
Untitled, 1988  
Acrylic on linen  
230 x 167 cm  
Courtesy of the artist |
|   | 11. Peter Schuyff  
Untitled, 1987  
Acrylic on linen  
304.8 x 304.8 cm  
The Gerard L. Cafesjian Collection |
|   | 12. Peter Schuyff  
Untitled, 1984  
Acrylic on linen  
230 x 167 cm  
Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery |
|   | 13. Peter Schuyff  
Nicotine, 1984  
Acrylic on linen  
230 x 167 cm  
Courtesy Sorry We're Closed, Bruxelles |
|   | 14. Peter Schuyff  
Untitled, 1985-88  
Acrylic on linen  
230 x 167 cm  
Courtesy Sorry We're Closed, Bruxelles |
|   | 15. Peter Schuyff  
Untitled, 1984  
Acrylic on linen  
230 x 167 cm  
Hall Art Foundation |

**Reception**

Peter Schuyff  
Wall painting, 2017  
Acrylic  

Peter Schuyff  
Oil on found portrait  
2011  
49.7 x 39.9 cm  
Courtesy of the artist