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CHRISTIAN EISENBERGER

DIE BERGE SCHMIEDEN SOLANGE SIE EISEN ESSEN
9975/13822/27937

OPENING: JUNE 8, 2016, 7 p.m.

DURATION: JUNE 9 – JULY 2, 2016

Opening words: Edelbert Köb

Christian Eisenberger will be present at the opening.

Burning for Art - Christian Eisenberger's *Räucherblätter (Smoked Paper)*

It has often be noted that Christian Eisenberger gives the impression of being an artist (and individual) who is driven by an inner force, cast out into the world, racing ahead. It is certainly true that he puts himself at the mercy of art. And this is something he has been doing for more than fifteen years, torn as he is between Vienna and Semriach, between his studio and his parents' farm. His artistic trajectory resembles the non-linear flight of a bat – an animal “that must fly / and stems from the womb”¹ His work does not have any solid foundation. It does not rest. It is groundless. Being cast out into the world without having laid the ground for his art, the artist does not follow fixed rules but rather embarks upon a search for them in his artistic production. In the temporal mode of past future he works towards “creating the rule of *what will have been made*.”²

His bustling impatience assumes form in his work with its multifariousness resisting any uniform ascription. He evades the seemingly cogent logic of the so-called artistic position by assuming or reoccupying as many different positions as possible; Everywhere and nowhere, placeless (*atopos*) and irretrievable. His art races ahead: »Laufen lassen« (let things take their course) and »fertig werden« (coming to grips) are its slogans. Here the artist's intuition always goes beyond his intention: Reflex instead of reflection, associative inspiration without conceptual certainty. And yet...the usual stylization of the artist by means of which one often insists on his blind vitalism and excessive actionism does not apply to all pieces. One exception is the *Smoked Papers*.

“Unsaturated like the flame / glowing and self-consuming / everything I touch turns to light / everything I leave to coal.” These are lines from a famous poetic self-portrait of Friedrich Nietzsche. The fact that Eisenberger, in 1999, dug a hole on the bank of a stream near his parents' home, covered this hole with a wire grid, on which he placed a smoking stove for his papers was probably also motivated by his conscious identification with fire. Yet the artist – the painter – seems to step back a bit here and to assume a passive stance towards his own work. He does not compete with fire but allows it to paint in his stead.³ Eisenberger thus goes much further than the Surrealist painter Wolfgang Paalen who invented the technique of *fumage* which was further developed by the avant-garde artists of the 20th century. Here fire is no longer used as a controllable painting instrument. The

¹ Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Duino Elegies: A Bilingual Edition*, “And how confused in any womb-born creature that has to fly! As if frightened of its own self, it zigzags through the air like a crack through a teacup. The way a bat's trace crazes the porcelain of evening.” On the image of the bat-artist, cf. Christian Eisenberger, *Reserve. Help me kill me, Kerber*, Bielefeld/Berlin 2012, p. 222.

² Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester University Press, 1984; Cf. on Paul Celan's poetological fragment on the invalidity of the Leibnizian principle of sufficient reason: “Like man, the poem has no sufficient reason, (...) except this one: the question regarding it.” (Paul Celan, *The Meridian*)

³ This stance finds an analogy in the artist's wish to let paint work by itself. “My technique (of painting) results from the paint itself. (...) The paint already acts by itself, you just have to let it do this.” (Christian Eisenberger, cited in: *Reserve*, *ibid.*, p. 9).

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destructive force and the restless potential of fire is directly transformed into creative painterly energy.

In the course of the smoking process, which can take more than eight hours and is often carried out to the utmost extreme of destruction, the *Smoked Papers* emerge under the patient eye of the waiting artist. As visual traces of the presence of the lively flame that dissipates in the picture, the *Smoked Paper* alludes to the consolidation of life whose untiring dynamic force appears in the element of fire.⁴ The soot traces left by the plumes of smoke that adhere to the surface of the paper generate ephemeral simulacra of life and also nuanced imagery of sure death.

The only signature of the artist inscribed in the composition of the painting is to be found in the selection of stencils which he uses to prepare the papers before the smoking process. These are in part figurative, in part abstract motifs from his repertory – shadow images whose suspended arrangement recalls certain *Rayographs* of Man Ray. A poetics of the fragmentary emerges from motifs that are like the dispersed individual pieces of a puzzle also materializing in a formal sense: from the withered paper that has been retracted from the fire shortly before being consumed by the flames often only charcoaled pieces remain. Language becomes a shadow of itself, losing its medial character. The word 'word' waits futilely to be given meaning and becomes a tautological sign that can refer to nothing else than itself. Other motifs, by contrast, refer to the power of nature to transform and be regenerated. The same fir branches that were used to fan the fire are used as stencils whose outlines in the picture make the branches appear as if rising up from the flames like the phoenix from the ashes.

At the end of the smoking process the artist removes the soot remaining on the surface of the paper. Traces of the carbon particles inhaled by him can then be found on the handkerchiefs he uses. The imagery emerging from this process should be seen as the Eisenberger's profane relics. The artist is an anti-redeemer who with his *Smoked Papers* creates modern icons of the fugacity of life without being able to save us from it.

(Giorgio Palma)

Christian Eisenberger was born 1978 in Semriach, Styria, he lives and works in Vienna.

Important solo exhibitions took place at the following institutions: Künstlerhaus Graz, Graz, AT (2014), Künstlerhaus Wien, Vienna, AT (2009), Kunsthalle Krems, Krems, AT (2008)... **Works by Christian Eisenberger have also been featured in the following group shows:** Grenzkunst-Halle, Jennersdorf, AT, Museum Tinguely, Basel, CH, Mumok, Vienna AT, Salon Dahlmann, Berleri, AT, Kunsthalle Vienna, AT, Leopold Museum, Vienna, AT, MUSA, Wien, AT, Forum Frohner, Krems AT, Lentos, Linz, AT, Forum Stadtpark, Graz, AT, neue Galerie, Graz, AT,...

Previous exhibitions – Galerie Krinzinger: Schlafzimmer, Krinzinger Projekte @ Parallel (2015), Amöbe, Krinzinger Projekte (2015), HIMMEL, WEISHEIT WALD, 9975/13107/27917, Galerie Krinzinger / Galerie im Parterre (2014), **Previous group exhibitions – Galerie Krinzinger:** AIR SRI LANKA, Krinzinger Projekte (2013)

⁴ In many ephemeral sculptures that the artist has created in the country, fire as a powerful force of life stands in a dialectical relation with ice and show as symbols of paralysis. On the relation between the image or painting and paralysis cf. *Kunst muss nicht wahrhaftiger sein als alles andere. Eine Online-Kommunikation zwischen Grete Müller, Christian Eisenberger, Karin Frank und Karl Karner*, Galerie 422, Gmunden 2014, p. 4 (“[...] painting is also always a form of paralysis by virtue of the fact that paint dries [...]. Are we really so badly in need of an anchor that we always need statements!!?!”)