ALMINE RECH

Markus Lüpertz
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Almine Rech Gallery is pleased to present the second solo exhibition by Markus Lüpertz with the gallery, including sculptures and paintings from 2008 to 2018.

Markus Lüpertz came of age in postwar West Germany during the late 1950s, fascinated by cinema. He recalls that movies inspired the serial aspect of his work, his development of individual motifs in multiple variations. Lüpertz had a surprising insight: "Cinema was always painting an image several times simultaneously." He referred to the slight differences we perceive, film frame to film frame, viewed in sequence—analogous to the material differences that appear between one of Lüpertz's paintings and another of a closely related configuration. As in cinema, so in Lüpertz's studio: "One painting leads to the next." His many variations of a theme—such as pastoral scenes, figures in classical poses, or reveries on an artist's palette—amount to more than the sum of the individual works in the series. They establish continuity, like a film, also like the painter's own creative life. Yet each work, isolated in a frame, has its own affective and formal complexity.

Lüpertz's images combine cultural evocation with material invention. To a palette, he joins a skull and a helmet to form a still-life arrangement; these objects, thematically rich, interact not only as cultural references but as contours, shapes, and colors. In works of a similar spirit, Lüpertz might include a turtle, a serpent, an officer's cap, a snail, a bird's wing, or even a rowboat (as in *Palette (Arcadien) Gold*, 2018). The rowboat itself evokes the theme of Arcadian paradise, which links Lüpertz's art to German predecessors of the nineteenth century, such as Hans von Marées, as well as to artists of the Renaissance and Baroque. His pastoral settings derive from his experience of the watery land around Märkisch Wilmersdorf, outside Berlin, where he maintains a studio. The Märkisch landscape, the artist's present environment, links his pictorial fantasies of the past to his everyday existence.

Interpretive narratives applied to Lüpertz's art eventually fail, the victim of his sensory excess and thematic contradiction. He is an artist of powerful instinct, whose pictorial strategies defy the single-mindedness of our habitual critical constructions. Hyperactivity, both physical and mental, is his norm. His polychromed sculptures are as dynamically and evocatively composed as his paintings. More an artist of action than of contemplation, he is constantly reenergized by the multiple works at various stages of progress that populate his studios.

With centuries of Western culture channeled into him, Lüpertz expresses this mass of information in new forms, suited to contemporary sensibility. “Painting is culture,” he says, “and who says culture says substance of the world. … Without painting the world is only consumed, it is not perceived.” What, finally, do we perceive? “It is not a concept, it is a feeling.” Lüpertz demonstrates that, yes, painting and sculpture convey the wisdom of the ages, but first, they are arts of feeling.

Richard Shiff