

Norbert Pümpel

Biography

Norbert Pümpel's artistic career began with concept art at the end of the 1970s. He decided not to attend an academy of art and instead studied mathematics, physics and philosophy (without graduating). As an autodidact he developed pictorial concepts at the interface with the sciences. "For decades, Pümpel has been addressing philosophical and scientific questions, which are given pictorial form in his conceptual-oriented art. His thinking is determined by problems of time and space, which have been an intensive subject of art since the early 20th century, the materiality of manifestations, questions of quantum physics and the theory of probability." (Christoph Bertsch, 2007) His works have included entropic drawings (starting in 1976), laser projects (1980) and work on the theory of black holes (1981) and Schrödinger's cat paradox (2005/2008).

Reality has evaporated

"Since the 1970s he has developed an art that operates at the interface of natural science, philosophy and theology, circling – on continually spiraling paths of thought – the old question of the possibility and the limits of human knowledge and, by extension, orbiting the potential of the image and its powers compared with reality." (Harald Kimpel, 2011)

What are at first questions of physics give way more and more to problems of philosophy and the theory of knowledge. It is evident that the artist, as a part of the universe, reflects on it and on himself: "Part of Universe Reflecting Part of Universe" (2004), a series of small diptychs first shown in the "Kraftwerk Peripher" exhibition organized by Christoph Bertsch in the Imst/Au power station. Some of the works now form part of the Liaunig Collection.

Peace policy is a frequent topic in Norbert Pümpel's work, starting with the monumental drawing "Probability Statement on a Guernica in the Late 20th Century" (1982). "In 1982, when N. Pümpel developed an infinite panorama of entropy under the title 'Probability Statement on a Guernica in the Late 20th Century', he simultaneously defined the beginning and endpoint for his future art. So completely had the artist eliminated the visible with his radical statement about the potential consequences of theory become practice, so fundamentally destroyed all form in shaping shapelessness, that – having depicted the irreversible state of chaos – there remained nothing capable of depiction. The very framework of matter had shattered and been dissolved once and for all in universal disorder. At an early point in his biography, therefore, the artist had adopted an extreme position with his views of nothingness, with an uncompromising message that could not but call into question any further form of constructive work." (Harald Kimpel, 1990)

The nuclear threat is also a recurrent subject with Pümpel the physicist. In 1989 he created the first Scientific Disaster Series (1990), his first ash works on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Between 2009 and 2011, too, Pümpel created large-format paper works under the title "Nuclear Solstice" on the subject of the nuclear tests conducted in the 1940s and 50s. Five large works from this group are now in the Liaunig Collection.

In his latest series of works, entitled "Condensates", Pümpel returns to the working methods of the natural sciences, employing laboratory-style test series to develop self-organizing image systems. "The works describe states of probability, blurring all spatial structures in new aggregate states and creating a liquid, fleeting, wave-dynamic image of the world." (Harald Kimpel, 2014)

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