

MAI 36 GALERIE

PRESS RELEASE

Zurich, March 2010

IAN ANÜLL

Opening: Saturday, March 6, 2010, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Exhibition: March 6 to April 17, 2010

Opening hours: Tues-Fri 11 a.m. to 6.30 p.m., Sat 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

We are pleased to present a suite of new works by the Zurich-based artist Ian Anüll (*1948 in Sempach). Since the 1980s he has been regularly represented in museums and galleries both at home and abroad. Currently, an extensive exhibition covering the past two and a half decades of Anüll's work is on view at the Helmhaus in Zurich (February 5 – April 5, 2010) and beginning May 22, 2010, Urs Meile Gallery in Beijing will mount a presentation of important aspects of his oeuvre. Mai 36 Galerie has represented the artist since 1988.

Ian Anüll does not cultivate a personal signature, a ploy that deliberately undermines the cult of personality and the notion of the artist as genius. He draws, paints, takes pictures, shoots films and makes objects. He uses found pieces from consumerism and the mass media, subjecting them to sophisticated modifications that subtly transform their meaning as signs and symbols.

The letter R appears almost like a leitmotif in Anüll's oeuvre: as the symbol that designates a registered trademark, it stands for a consumer world governed by marketing. For instance, he placed the trademark ® on the base of a sculpture – a used, green designer chair issued by a Dutch studio in the 60s and early 70s – therefore making it not visible. In contrast, fashion labels sewed onto 56 canvases make an outspoken and conspicuous appearance. Measuring 40 x 50 cm, they are the approximate size of a man's chest. The artist had removed well-known and lesser-known fashion labels from men's and women's clothing and instead of discarding the clothing, he imprisoned it in two round cages with iron bars two metres high, standing on concrete bases. Another similarly witty and allusive installation consists of two old, extremely dilapidated highchairs on the backs of which he has inscribed the words «not art» and «copy» in Cyrillic lettering. Not only does this piece unmistakably reference Walter Benjamin's discourse on the technical reproducibility of the work of art, it also demonstrates the artist's penchant for upsetting our value system by turning garbage into a work of art, thereby reevaluating and upgrading it. Toxic securities as waste products are the subject matter of L'odeur et l'argent. A whiskey glass filled with perfume is placed next to a decanter stuffed full of bank notes cut into snippets. The associative potential is almost unlimited, ranging from Jeremias Gotthelf's novel Geld und Geist (Money and Mind) to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical analogies involving money, power and excrement.

Attaching a label to a work of art reduces it to a mere commodity. Using such artistic devices and contextual shifts, Anüll exposes the mechanics of the art trade. But no matter what path he chooses to follow, he is inevitably a cog in a system that goes hand-in-hand with a manifest trademark mentality. This he gleefully exploits in his send-up of the art market. In order to make a dent in that same market, he has to bow to a system that calls for strategic positioning by way of a trademark – a procedure which is even more imperative in his case since he refuses to submit an artistic signature of his own. Hence, nothing could be more appropriate than to put the ubiquitous trademark ® on his flags and declare it to be his own registered trademark. [Text: Dominique von Burg]

The preview is on Saturday, March 6 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Ian Anüll will be present. For visuals, please contact: office@mai36.com. It is our pleasure to welcome you to the gallery.

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