

PRESS RELEASE

**JOHN BEECH, JOACHIM GROMMEK, ELLEN HYLLEMOSE,  
JAN VAN DER PLOEG, GIACOMO SANTIAGO ROGADO, RUTH ROOT,  
MARKUS WEGGENMANN – Virtual Insanity  
24 February – 21 April 2012**

ftc. Berlin begins its new season of exhibitions in 2012 with a group show titled *virtual insanity*, offering various perspectives and ways of working with abstract painting. We deliberately chose only one artist from our current gallery program - Markus Weggenmann - and used his work as the foundation for the rest of our selection, focusing our attention on very different artistic concepts on an international level. The interplay of form and color is the common factor in the works of all the artists, who raise and explore questions about Minimal Art, Op-Art, Color Field Painting, the Constructivist tradition, and the various mixed forms derived from them.

John Beech, born 1964 in Winchester, England; lives and works in New York City. A street in Niagara Falls, New York, on the American side, is seen in a black-and-white photograph, which serves as the background for the silver automotive paint that covers it, so that only the edges of the photograph are left visible. Form(s) and color in the drawing are more relevant than the motif: the title alone lets us know what it is about, while the place itself disappears almost entirely beneath the paint. Joachim Grommek, born 1957 in Wolfsburg, Germany; lives and works in Berlin. In his works Grommek questions our perception: are the pieces of black foil simply glued onto the substrate of the painting, or . . . ? No, everything is painted, and this is where we experience Grommek's actual aspirations: the composition is at the center of his oeuvre, while everything else is just a means to an end. The deception of our eyes serves only to expand the horizons of our perception.

Ellen Hyllemose, born 1968 in Møn, Denmark; lives and works in Copenhagen. Hyllemose works with colorfully painted MDF panels, which are covered in shimmering swimsuit fabric and arranged as sculptural-looking wall objects. They play with our perception of fore- and background, of covering and uncovering, and ultimately, of the exchange between color and material. Focal points shift, and in the end, the question of genre is marginally, since the emphasis is more on the connection of the different materials, the color palette, and the installation of the work.

Jan van der Ploeg, born 1959 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands; lives and works in Amsterdam. Van der Ploeg's mural features a highly unconventional, generally cheerful formal vocabulary assembled from specific, recurring elements. Visual hierarchies are erased; fore- and background are no longer subject to any hierarchical laws. We experience both the murals and the canvases as a contemporary interpretation of the ideas and approaches of the Dutch De Stijl movement.

Giacomo Santiago Rogado, born 1979 in Lucerne, Switzerland; lives and works in Berlin. Borrowing from Op-Art, the work shown here also develops its own idiosyncratic dynamic: offset triangles literally jut out of the canvas; in some places the background seems to move forward and swallow up the wide, light-colored bars. Although any given visual unit is rendered in a purely technical way, it seems to slowly dissolve upon detailed observation - nothing looks the same as it did at first glance. It is not until the observer becomes involved that the visual effects are realized and the actuality of illusionist painting is being questioned.

Ruth Root, born 1967 in Chicago, Illinois, United States; lives and works in New York City. The work by Root seen here is primarily distinguished by the very flat aluminum substrate and the thinly applied paint, so that the work seems to have been painted directly on the wall. "The wall is the negative space, and functions as the rest of the canvas," says Root, explaining her idea of space and painting, and indeed, the work does seem to almost disappear into the wall. The amorphous shapes of color fields structure the painting as a whole. Color and form result in an apparently controlled order, which becomes an outstandingly sensual experience.

Markus Weggenmann, born 1953 in Singen/Hohentwiel, Germany; lives and works in Zurich. Upon more closely observing the work shown here, one can make out the vast spaces of a seaside landscape: the depths of the space open up through color and form alone. All the same, the red surface is, however, like an oversized, red, flowing blob of a brushstroke. Ultimately, the viewer has to decide if he is looking at an abstract motif or a representational work, as the familiar forms and colors of Weggenmann's palette are presented in a new way.