

## PRESS RELEASE

# Kunsthalle Münster

### IRONY & IDEALISM

May 27 – September 30, 2018

#### A Note from the Curator

*Dr. Gail B. Kirkpatrick (Catalog Text)*

As the curator responsible for the final presentation of the traveling exhibition “Irony and Idealism,” I felt inspired to explore what meanings its redolently ambiguous title evokes within the context of Münster. During a panel discussion at the Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art, in Ansan, South Korea, the artists talked about what the title implied in terms of their own artistic production. They mostly related it to the pursuit of an ultimately unattainable artistic ideal that constitutes the never-ending ironic dilemma of artistic production. As the curator of the exhibition in Germany I had other considerations in mind.

The diverse oeuvres of the eight artists in the show cover a wide spectrum of media, from painting and sculpture/installation to video and conceptual works. Yet despite the obvious differences in production methods, they reveal a certain commonality in terms of artistic language. I have participated in other international exchange projects where I was confronted with such diverse artistic modes of expression that I literally felt lost in a visual translation; however, these artists move within the conceptual and perceptual parameters of an artistic lexicon that delineates critical standards for intellectual and visual communication in the international art world.

As Gregor Jansen pointed out in his discussion of new Korean art in the context of internationalism, creative production is involved in a network of forces predicated on global media culture, technological advancement, and all forms of design, advertising, and popular culture. Products like Mercedes Benz, Hyundai, Apple, and Samsung set the tone for contemporary communication, which in turn influences the visual language of art. In this globalized context the audience is confronted with artistic forms of expression that transcend political boundaries and reach audiences spanning the globe.

A rather utopic idealism presupposes any notion of a universal artistic language, yet the prevalent forms of artistic expression are already accessible to an international public and can be understood as enhancing multinational mutual understanding. Ironically it is this underlying

similarity in aesthetic expression that allows for articulation and understanding of the cultural differences found in the thematic considerations of the South Korean and German artists, such as how they reflect upon their own histories, attitudes about social conduct, and personal biographies.

The works of two painters in the exhibition, Jisan Ahn and Michal van Ofen, illustrate this principle. Both artists employ a style predicated on a method of reduction that can be seen to reflect the autonomy of painting. Their artistic languages reflect their roots in the Modernist tradition, particularly in their articulation of what constitutes the essential elements of a painting and the expressive potentials of pure color and form. Their works can equally be enjoyed for their abstract painterly qualities, which place them solidly in the context of an international art historical language. Yet the respective thematic considerations communicated by the paintings of these two artists clearly indicate that their mindsets have been nurtured in decidedly different cultural contexts.

Van Ofen concentrates on the deconstruction of European painting traditions, predominantly Italian and German landscapes, portraits, and genre paintings. He has taught himself nineteenth-century painting techniques as a way to dissect the essence of a profoundly Western mode of expression at a time when its descriptive naturalism came into question with the advent of photography. Ahn's works also reflect on a pictorial tradition of his country, offering the viewer subtle impressions of Korea at a time of nascent consumerism. His newest works are based on images gleaned from commercials and advertisements produced in the 1970s, their language reflecting a long-gone Korean sensibility through subtle, emotionally charged moments culled from the collective memory.

Exhibitions that take national identity as a selection criterion open up avenues of discourse about the possibility of communicating cultural diversity via common artistic languages. The title of this exhibition proves suitable to this endeavor: it is precisely the junction between idealism and irony, the sense of a formal artistic idealism coupled with the ironic possibility of questioning its own premises, that makes this project a dynamic cultural exchange with critical potential. The cultural dichotomy is made more profound and complex by the fact that many of the Korean artists studied in the United States and Europe.

Within the globalized multiplicity of our highly mobile contemporary society, the pursuit of an accepted common denominator for communication is paramount for peaceful coexistence, and yet different cultural heritages must still be acknowledged, and even celebrated, as positive expressions of human diversity and individual identity. Cultural-exchange programs like "Irony and Idealism" offer important opportunities for reflection on these essential human conditions.

*A catalog will be produced for the exhibition.*

## List of exhibited installations:

### **Björn Dahlem**

*Superstructure (Cosmic Web)*

2018

Aluminum, steel, wood, mirror, pipette, hygrometer, sulfur, pyrite, textile cable, paint, foam, LED light hose, glass vase, glass bowl, round bottomed flask, billiard ball, Jägermeister, cola

Dimensions variable

Courtesy Gallery W. Baudach Berlin and Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf

### **Yoon Jongsuk**

Courtesy Gallery next St. Stephan Rosemarie Black Forest

*The Sun*

2018

Oil on canvas

195 x 260 cm

Birth of Earth

2018

Oil on canvas

195 x 360 cm

### **Gimhongsok**

*Jeju Island*

2004

Video, color, 16: 9, 20:45 min.

Courtesy of the artist

*G5*

2004

Video, color, sound, 4: 3, 17:14 min.

Courtesy of the artist and Artsonje Center

*MOP 131,209*

2013

Urethane paint on canvas

120 x 120 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery, Seoul

*MOP-131211*

2013

Urethane paint on canvas

120 x 120 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery, Seoul

**Michael van Ofen**

Courtesy of the artist and Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf

*The Symbolic Extension of the Self from the Prospects of the Early Contemporaries. Facial Tattoo after Ludwig York Choris, 1822*

2016

Oil on canvas

38 x 32 cm

*Authority and Regalia, Porträt des Chefs des Zivilkabinetts II, Geheimrat Hermann von Lucanus, 1908*

2013

Oil on canvas

52 x 38 cm

*Authority and Regalia, Fürst Bismarck am Bundesratstisch, Anton von Werner, 155 x 115, Oil on Canvas, 1888*

2013

Oil on canvas

52 x 40 cm

*The Symbolic Extension of the Self from the Prospects of the Early Contemporaries. Colored Textile Application in: Anton von Werner, "Kaiser Friedrich auf dem Hofball 1887", 118 x 95 cm, 1895*

2017

Oil on canvas

250 x 190 cm

*The Symbolic Extension of the Self from the Prospects of the Early Contemporaries. Plants and tattoos after Jean-Baptiste Debret*

2016

Oil on canvas

74 x 66 cm

*The Symbolic Extension of the Self from the Prospects of the Early Contemporaries. Tattoo and Applique in: William Hodges, Portrait of a Maori Chieftain, 1773*

2016

Oil on canvas

63 x 57 cm

*Wa-sáw-me-saw, Roaring Thunder, Youngest Son of Black Hawk, George Catlin, 1832*

2016

Oil on canvas

63 x 57 cm

**Bae Young-whan**

*Abstract verb: Dance for ghost dance*

2012

Two-channel video, 640 x 360, 4:53 min.

Courtesy of the artist

**Ahn Jisan**

*Untitled*

2018

Oil on canvas

65 x 50 cm

Courtesy Gallery Bart, Amsterdam

*Untitled*

2018

Oil on canvas

65 × 50 cm

Courtesy Gallery Bart, Amsterdam

*Untitled*

2018

Oil on canvas

45.5 × 53 cm

Courtesy Guus Loomans, private collection, Maarsse

*Untitled*

2018

Oil on canvas

45.5 × 53 cm

Courtesy Gallery Bart, Amsterdam

*Untitled*

2018

Oil on canvas

50 × 65 cm

Courtesy private collection, Nijmegen

*Untitled*

2018

Oil on canvas

50 × 65 cm

Courtesy Gallery Bart, Amsterdam

*Untitled*

2018

Oil on canvas

50 × 65 cm

Courtesy Gallery Bart, Amsterdam

**Manfred Pernice**

*Progress III*

2012

Wood, painted

Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf

*the 4th Roland*

2012

Wood

218 × 74 × 172 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf

*Kubo-Kahla 3 [enlargement of Kahla table-mo (nu) ment]*

2015

Wood, cardboard

555 × 150 × 150 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Gallery New, Berlin

## **Hwayeon Nam**

*Imjingawa*

2017

Video, Stereo, 16: 9, 24:16 min.

Courtesy of the artist

## **SKR\_D**

Trilogy in studio 4.1, Speicher II

*Curated by Benedikt Fahrnschon*

## **Il Jong Park (Ille)\_Malte van de Water**

Mai 27 – July 8, 2018

## **Il Suk Lee\_Moritz Hagedorn**

July 14 – August 19, 2018

## **Suna Kim\_TWIG ART: GROUP**

August 25 – September 30, 2018

## **Kunsthalle Münster**

Speicher II · Hafenweg 28 · 48155 Münster

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