

## Martin Beck rumors and murmurs

mumok Museum moderner Kunst  
Stiftung Ludwig Wien  
Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Wien

*rumors and murmurs*  
Exhibition dates  
May 6 to September 3, 2017

*watching sugar dissolve in a glass of water*  
May 6, 2017 to January 14, 2017

Press conference  
May 5, 2017, 10 am

Opening  
May 5m 2017, 7 pm

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From May 6, 2017 will be presenting a one-person exhibition on the work of New York- and Vienna-based artist Martin Beck. Focusing on themes central to Beck's oeuvre such as display, memory, collectivity, and imaging, the exhibition will bring together selected works from the past ten years with a new body of work produced for the occasion. As strategies of installation and display are central to his practice, Beck will actively engage with the exhibition's format and layout. The show will be composed of sculptures, photographs, video works, drawings, books as well as spatial interventions into the exhibition space.

One of Beck's key bodies of work references modern exhibiting systems, specifically taking up the relationships between emancipation and control that they incorporate. His video installation *About the Relative Size of Things in the Universe* (2007), for which he reconstructed George Nelson's Struc-Tube exhibition system from the 1940s, addresses questions of appropriation and economies of artistic representation while also reflecting on the paradoxical role modular exhibiting systems have in the history of exhibitions. While ease of handling and wide-reaching information delivery fulfilled the emancipatory quest of the modern avant-garde, Struc-Tube's coherence is also an emblem for the reorganization of labor in modern capitalism.

Another work engaging questions of historicity and display is Beck's *rumors and murmurs (Polygon)* (2012). This painting-like fabric element covers a whole exhibition wall and is, simultaneously, an autonomous art work, an architectural intervention, and a functional object. It is defined by a subtle geometrical pattern resulting from sewing together polygonal fabric segments that follow an "anarchic" geometry laid out in Steve Bear's counterculture building manual *Dome Cookbook* (1968). *Rumors and murmurs (Polygon)* interlaces the 1960s pursuit of alternative living structures with the experiential dimension of an exhibition space.

While Beck's art has always exhibited conceptual rigor and an economy of means, his more recent works further integrate the body and affect into his investigations of display. His project, *Last Night* (2013–), derives from one of the final parties at the seminal New York dance venue The Loft at 99 Prince Street. Key to the project is a book that meticulously lists the specifics of the thirteen hours of music played that night. The book interlaces structure and passion and is a document about an ephemeral space in time of community and emotion. Beck is currently working on a thirteen-hour film about the records documented in the book. The film, titled *June 2, 1984*, will be a central element of the mumok exhibition.

*Last Night* points to historical junctures and paradoxes: moments when the promise of freedom and the exercise of control, escapist utopias and the economization of the everyday, the possible and the impossible not only coexist but are mutually interdependent. A further part of this group of works is a thirteen-hour film (*June 2,*

1984), which shows records being played on a contemporary record player in a private setting at the party.

*rumors and murmurs* will also include sets of Beck's recent body of work titled *Flowers* (2015) which is composed of photographs showing the assembly and disassembly of a spectacular flower bouquet by an elderly florist. When first shown in New York, Beck combined such sets of *Flowers* with his stainless steel sculpture, *183X113* (2014), a blue gradient wall sculpture (*All that is left*, 2015), and the video work *Strategy Notebook* (2015) to form an environment that oscillated between elegiac vanitas and corporate bliss. In the mumok exhibition sets of *Flowers* will be installed to form a guiding path through the exhibition and, at points, will be juxtaposed with *183X113* and *Strategy Notebook*.

Curated by Matthias Michalka

## **watching sugar dissolve in a glass of water**

May 6, 2017 to January 14 2018

In conjunction with Martin Beck's own show, mumok is also presenting a new selection and arrangement of works from our collection, curated by Beck himself. His selection focuses on works of the 1960s and 1970s and indicates a number of important influences on Beck's own artistic work—in art and design, architecture and popular culture. Abstract and figurative, and conceptual and painterly approaches are presented in often surprising combinations and exciting arrangements. Beck sees these combinations as scenes, in the sense of places where new links are created and surprising conflicts are enacted. The exhibition title, *watching sugar dissolve in a glass of water*, refers to a process of precise observation and the transformation of aggregate states of affairs.

Martin Beck's collection exhibition is closely linked to his own show, *rumors and murmurs*. The two exhibition designs—on two levels of the museum—are nearly identical, but nonetheless meet different needs within their own specific contexts. While the walls and spatial elements in *watching sugar dissolve in a glass of water* are used primarily as functional surfaces, in *rumors and murmurs* the same architecture is used to explore the borders between artworks, presentation structure, and processes of orientation.

## **Kurzbiografie Martin Beck**

Martin Beck lives in New York and Vienna. His exhibitions include *The thirty-six sets do not constitute a sequence* (2015), 47 Canal, New York; *Approx. 13 Hours* (2014), castillo/corrales, Paris; *the particular way in which a thing exists* (2012-13), Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Montreal; *Remodel*, Ludlow 38, New York (2011); *Panel 2—“Nothing better than a touch of ecology and catastrophe to unite the social classes...”*, Gasworks, London (2008), Arthur Ross Architecture Gallery, New York (2009); *The details are not the details* (2007) Orchard, New York. His works were on view at the 29th São Paulo Biennial (in collaboration with Julie Ault) and the 4th Bucharest

Biennial (2010).

Together with Julie Ault, Danh Vo and others, Beck curated the exhibition *Macho Man: Tell It To My Heart* for Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel; Culturgest, Lisbon; and Artists Space, New York (2013).

Beck's publications include *Exhibit viewed played populated* (2005), *About the Relative Size of Things in the Universe* (2007), *The Aspen Complex* (2012), *Last Night* (2013), *the particular way in which a thing exists* (2014), and *Summer Winter East West* (2015).