

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

On view
30 November 2018 to
28 April 2019

Press conference
Wednesday, 28 November 2018
10 am

Opening
Thursday, 29 November 2018,
7 pm



Ernst Caramelle,
Video-Landschaften, 1974
Photo: Rainer Drexel
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Ernst Caramelle A Résumé

mumok is presenting the first large-scale retrospective of the work of Austrian artist Ernst Caramelle. Titled *A Résumé*, the show covers all of the artist's work phases from 1974 to today. As early as 1976, Caramelle already used the term *Resümee* as the title of his multimedia thesis at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, which consisted of a cardboard box containing 23 drawings and collages, 12 photographs, a Super 8 film, an audiotape, and an object, thereby assembling nearly all the media and techniques the artist still uses today.

The exhibition *A Résumé* picks up on the self-assured, ironic approach that Ernst Caramelle already demonstrated at the start of his career. It thus shows his work *Resümee* in a reversed loop at the end of the exhibition circuit, which interweaves media and conceptual processes to enable viewers to trace the many connections between the works and work groups. The cross-references reveal the artist's complex musings and deliberations while unfolding all the diversity of his fecund pictorial inventions. We gain insights into Ernst Caramelle's method without its subtle strategic intricacy being reduced or demystified.

The retrospective is designed to render tangible this continuous referentiality between the various media – the drawings, the paintings known as Gesso Pieces and Sun Pieces, the wall paintings, photography and video, prints, and media interventions – by interweaving thematic threads with chronology.

In addition to the around 350 works spanning four decades on view in the retrospective, Ernst Caramelle is also producing two new site-specific wall paintings for mumok whose methods and themes tie in with the spatial concept for the show and with his oeuvre as a whole.

Curated by Sabine Folie in close collaboration with the artist, the exhibition offers fresh perspectives on Caramelle's work as well as its art-historical reassessment and repositioning in the overall context of national and international conceptual strategies from the 1970s to the present.

As a young artist in the 1970s, Ernst Caramelle already ranged between the media of film, photography, and drawing. Between 1973 and the early 1980s, he produced hundreds of drawings, which he then showed in a series of exhibitions in 1981 and published in the artist's book *Blätter 1973–1978*. A selection of them is featured in the exhibition at mumok. These drawings mark a strategy that can be interpreted as an against-the-grain *disegno* concept. With digressive scribbling and drawing in thought loops as well as linguistic allusions, they allude to twentieth-century Romantic and avant-garde literary traditions. Topics such as the artist's location and his activities in general predominate here. The first "codes" of Caramelle's cosmos also appear, for example his various alter egos, the zigzag, and the house, motifs that he will successively expand on later. His fine sense of pictorial wit and slapstick, evident in comic-like elements with nonsensical undertones, contributes to undermining "pure" form, whether in drawing or, somewhat later, in (abstract)

painting. This includes the way he lends his works a pronounced casual and fleeting character.

From the very beginning, Caramelle has methodically incorporated in his work deeper meanings, irony, the paradoxical, and a meticulous examination of the conditions determining our perception. He thus produced in the 1970s, during a research fellowship at MIT (Cambridge, MA), his first video works and the installation *Video-Ping-Pong* (1974), in which he ontologically investigates the transformation of reality and its perception through new technologies.

In the early 1980s, Ernst Caramelle began to further expand his semiotic and media vocabulary. The fast and ingenious drawings were now joined by paintings, whereby the artist once again subverted conventions by painting mostly on walls, or using wood or cardboard rather than canvas. In his Gesso Pieces, he uses the classic chalk ground as his painting surface, which he paints alternately with watercolor, ink, or acrylic. As he switches between wall painting and panel painting, the parameters of painting are also defined differently: the picture space is conceived as unlimited and resembles an optical illusion alternating between two- and three-dimensionality.

Later, he began painting watercolors as well, which follow similar principles as the Gesso Pieces but are in some cases more narrative. The surfaces of the pictures are like experimental set-ups for investigating the essence of exhibiting, of art and art production. Abstraction and emblematic figuration as well as floral formlessness interact here constantly as in the drawings – as a kind of testing, critical, boundlessly anarchic attitude.

Caramelle also created his first Sun Pieces in the early 1980s. These make do entirely without the gestural handwriting of the artist, and he poetically describes their materials as “sun on paper.” To produce them, the artist makes stencils and layers them on colored paper, after which he exposes the piece to direct sunlight for months or even years. This results in works made solely from fading color and passing time.

Posters, postcards, and artist’s books, which Ernst Caramelle has always designed for his exhibitions since the 1970s, are also an integral part of his artistic practice, as are media interventions and the editing of media images in his screen prints.

Biography

Ernst Caramelle, born in 1952 in Hall in Tyrol, did an apprenticeship in glass painting (1966–1970) and then studied industrial design at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. He completed his studies under Oswald Oberhuber in 1976 with his multimedia work *Resümee*. In 1974/75 he was a research fellow at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at MIT in Cambridge, MA. Guest professorships at the Städelschule in Frankfurt (1981/82), the University of Applied Arts Vienna (1986–1990), and the Gesamthochschule Kassel (1992/93) followed. In 1991/92 he was a tutor at the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht. From 1994 to 2018 he taught at the State Academy of Fine Arts in Karlsruhe, where he was also rector from 2012 to 2018.

Ernst Caramelle has exhibited worldwide and received numerous awards. His work is represented in many public collections, including mumok – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien; Generali Foundation Collection, Vienna/Salzburg; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves, Porto; Kunsthaus Bregenz; and Neues Museum Weserburg, Bremen.

The artist lives and works in Frankfurt and New York.

Curated by Sabine Folie

Exhibition catalogue

Ernst Caramelle: A Résumé

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