

# BEN BROWN FINE ARTS



Ernst Wilhelm Nay, (1902-1968), *Schwarz mit gelbem Band*, 1966, Oil on canvas, 162 x 131 cm. (63 3/4 x 51 5/8 in.)

## ASPECTS OF GERMAN ART (PART ONE)

15 SEPTEMBER – 24 OCTOBER

PRIVATE VIEW TUESDAY 15 SEPTEMBER, 6-8:30PM

Ben Brown Fine Arts Hong Kong is proud to present *Aspects of German Art (Part One)*, a comprehensive survey of German post-war and contemporary art, featuring works by some of the most important and pioneering artists working in Germany during this period. The exhibition brings together seminal paintings, photographs and installations that provide an overview of the artistic, socio-economic and political concerns of post-war Germany, a time period when these artists were reconciling with the trauma of war, finding a national identity and constantly pushing the limits of modern and contemporary art, through to the present day.

Following please find a brief overview of the artists who are included in the exhibition.

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**Rosemarie Trockel (b. 1952)** Rosemarie Trockel, a prolific female artist whose *oeuvre* includes sculpture, collage, works on paper, film and “knitted paintings,” has always strived to establish dialogues on gender politics, the role of female artists, the commoditisation of art, distinctions between fine art and craft, and cultural taxonomies through her work. Trockel is widely recognized for her signature “knitted paintings” which consist of machine-knitted wool often stretched onto frames and patterned with provocative, computer-generated logos and motifs, subverting the notion of traditionally female pursuits by altering the process and materials.

**Günther Förg (1952-2013)** Günther Förg, painter, photographer, sculptor and graphic designer, is most highly regarded for his monochromatic lead paintings. These tactile, minimalist works were achieved by wrapping lead over wood panels and stretchers and layering them with acrylic in either one or two colours, the lead providing a rough ground for his gestural work that was highly informed by modernism, through a postmodern lens.

**Georg Baselitz (b. 1938)** Georg Baselitz, a pioneer of the Neo-Expressionist movement in Germany, has spent his career exploring the post-war German identity, creating evocative, tormented, crudely painted and uniquely coded works of art. Considered one of the most influential and prominent living artists, Baselitz’s output includes painting, sculpture, works on paper and prints. Rendering his figures, buildings and landscapes upside down is a significant trope of Baselitz’s work, further referencing human and cultural trauma and instability.

**A.R. Penck (b. 1939)** Painter, printmaker, sculptor and jazz musician, A.R. Penck was a leader of the Neo-Expressionist movement and is renowned for his iconographic, simplified, brutally rendered paintings. Throughout his career, Penck has developed a unique pictography of geometric markings, patterns, totemic forms and figures that is wrought with tension and ambiguity, his paintings and works on paper teeming with arrestingly graphic imagery.

**Franz Ackermann (b. 1963)** Franz Ackermann is a painter and installation artist whose dynamic works simultaneously explore globalization, travel, consumerism, urbanism, utopia and catastrophe. Ackermann employs explosively vivid colours to create monumental paintings of fantastical landscapes that are at once seductively alluring in their hyper-reality yet verge on the apocalyptic. The kaleidoscopic experience of navigating through his works compels viewers to cautiously contemplate the false glamour stemming from a consumerist, transient and disconnected society.

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**Dirk Skreber (b. 1961)** Dirk Skreber's disquieting paintings are characterized by a cool detachment, fascination with catastrophe, and interest in the sublimity of mundane landscapes, vehicles and architecture. His uncanny compositions set photo-realist elements such as cars, trains and buildings against flat, abstracted backgrounds, often depicted from an aerial viewpoint suggestive of surveillance cameras, further emphasizing a neutrality and distance from such seemingly charged imagery.

**Thomas Zipp (b. 1966)** Thomas Zipp creates fantastical, eerie paintings and installations that explore the dark side and transgressions of mankind. Zipp's recurring motifs of psychiatry wards, condemned historical figures, nuclear weaponry, psychedelic drugs, heavy metal music and Gothic imagery painted in dusky, grisaille tones, offer a menacing perspective of Western civilization, conflating dreams and nightmares of the past, present and future to apocalyptic proportions.

**André Butzer (b. 1973)** André Butzer combines abstraction and figuration in his psychedelic, anarchic, apocalyptic and often humorous paintings, which have been nominally labelled "Science-Fiction Expressionism". His thickly impastoed paintings teem with obsessive, frantic scrawl that demonstrate not only his unabashed interest in expressionistic painting in a postmodern era but his highly coded visual vocabulary. Butzer's grey and black paintings offer an achromatic neutrality that allows the artist to focus solely on the form and materiality of his work.

**Heinz Mack (b. 1931)** Heinz Mack entered the canon of art history for his part in creating ZERO, an artistic movement founded with Otto Piene in 1957. ZERO's manifesto advocated pure and limitless possibilities in artistic creation and marked a distinct departure from the gestural language of European abstract expressionism. Mack's early works are characterised by a minimalist, monochromatic aesthetic and a reverence for the transformative power of light.

**Gert and Uwe Tobias (b. 1973)** Gert and Uwe Tobias, Romanian-born twin brothers living in Cologne, work as a collaborative producing fantastical and elaborate woodcut prints, collages, ceramics, sculptures and installations. Taking inspiration from their Romanian heritage, the brothers incorporate folkloric legend and traditional craft-based practices into their work, while distinguishing it with references to contemporary culture and their own idiosyncratic pictorial language.

**Wolfgang Tillmans (b. 1968)** Considered the documentarian of his generation, Wolfgang Tillmans's informal and candid photographs earned him the Turner Prize in 2000. Early in his career, Tillmans was fascinated by British youth culture and began documenting his

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contemporaries in the London street and club scenes. Tillmans has also been interested in the mechanical processes of photography, experimenting with chemicals, laser copy printers and light sensitive paper. Tillmans installs his works in very haphazard ways, with unframed photographs hung salon style by clips and tapes, alongside media clippings and ephemera, banishing any hierarchy within his exhibitions.

**Sigmar Polke (1941-2010)** Sigmar Polke's *oeuvre* is marked by a fascination with experimentation and manipulation of artistic media. Polke printed his photographs with intentional haphazardness, underexposing, overexposing, combining negatives and positives, repeating images, creasing wet photo paper, using chemical solvents to create stains, and hand colouring blemishes made from a scratched negative. Polke would continue this experimentation in his paintings, combining pigments, solvents, resins and fabrics to produce extreme chemical reactions, forever questioning the rules of conventional art making.

**Gerhard Richter (b. 1932)** Gerhard Richter has found success in every stage of his varied artistic output, which has included both photo-realist and abstract painting as well as photography. Richter's work demonstrates an unyielding exploration of colour (or absence of colour), texture, source materials, pictorial representation and abstraction—all the while moving seamlessly between artistic styles and series that are entirely unique and pioneering. Richter has garnered critical and commercial acclaim internationally and is considered one of the most important living painters.

**Imi Knoebel (b. 1940)** Imi Knoebel, a conceptual and abstract artist who has pursued drawing, painting, photography, light projection, installation and sculpture in his illustrious artistic career, has always sought to explore the relationship between space, colour and form in his work. In the 1970s, Knoebel began applying gestural and geometric forms of primary colours to plywood boards and metal plates, later developing a more minimalist approach to his colour application.

**Georg Karl Pfahler (1926-2002)** Georg Karl Pfahler explored the spatial effects of colour in his iconic paintings, using varying shapes and forms as a means to examine the interrelationships between colours. His early experimentation with techniques including ink, drawing and collage led to the gradual simplification of his style. In the early 1960s, his block-like forms turned into distinctly delineated areas of flat, unmodulated colour, distinguishing Pfahler as the sole exponent of "Hard-Edge" painting in Germany, at a time when expressionism reigned dominant.

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**Markus Lüpertz (b. 1941)** Markus Lüpertz, a notable member of the post-war German Neo-Expressionist movement, successfully synthesizes abstraction and pictorial motif in his monumental paintings and sculpture. His seemingly abstract works frequently reference classical and mythological figures, as well as what he dubbed “German motifs”, such as helmets, canons, antlers and wheat fields.

## **Ernst Wilhelm Nay (1902-1968)**

Ernst Wilhelm Nay arrived at the height of his career in the 1950s when he shifted from expressive realism to total abstraction. Nay’s abstract paintings were characterized by bold, flat, graphic blocks of pure colour arranged in rhythmic and repetitive patterns across the picture plane, demonstrating his interest in the relationship between music, rhythm, colour and form.

## **Max Beckmann (1884-1950)**

One of the most important German figurative painters of the twentieth century, Max Beckmann’s work was highly informed by his harrowing experiences during both World War I and World War II. His portraits are often characterized by their fractured angularity, exaggerated and distorted human features, and amplified colours. In the 1920s, Beckmann was associated with the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) movement, in which its members sought to represent the sordid and disaffected post-war society of the Weimar Republic with critical and often satirical realism.