

Shaping Space

Galerie ISA is delighted to present ***Shaping Space***, a group exhibition that brings together a dynamic combination of works by: Christian Achenbach, Edouard Baribeaud, Aldo Chaparro, Robert Elfgen, Olafur Eliasson, Martin Kobe, Anselm Reyle and Joseph Tong.

As the title suggests, all the artists in the exhibition are engaged with either the metaphysical notion of space and how to translate it, or with its physical manipulation, be it through painting, sculpture, works on paper and even light.

Man's relationship to space has had a pivotal role in the evolution of societies across the world and our understanding of space and our interactions with each other, via space, have arguably never been more crucial as a topic for investigation. Indeed the very word 'space' conjures up the idea of exploration. Now though, the word 'space' more often leads us via our imaginations beyond our own planet, into the far reaches of the solar system. Still though the word remains an emotive and even a politicised concept. There are already legal battles in place over who owns space, and, closer to home, we defend our own sense of space and even talk in military terms about the 'invasion' of our own 'personal' space or about protecting our 'time and space' - neither of which are actually physical, yet, like the wind we feel more aware of both when they are in some way diminished or augmented. Space then is an inspiring concept: something to dream about, to seek to conquer and to defend. Not surprising then that it has captivated artists for generations and that it is no less valid now.

We cannot help but think about space as soon as we are confronted by the paintings and sculptures of Christian Achenbach (b.1978 in Siegen, Germany). Exploding with a riot of colour they have been described as being at the crossroads of 'sight, sound, colour and shape'. They are as playful and engaging as the landscapes of Robert Elfgen (b.1972 in Wesseling am Rhein, Germany) are sublime and ethereal, capturing as they do the elusive notion of endless, unbroken vistas and dreamy far off horizons. Edouard Baribeaud (b.1984 in Paris, France) draws us into a very different kind of space where the archaic meets the mythical and the folkloric is elevated to the grandest of designs. Baribeaud's fine drawings translate into theatrical visions which entice the viewer into a land of fantastic and characterful imaginings.

If Baribeaud and Elfgen are about elusive or far away spaces, then Peruvian artist, Aldo Chaparro (b.1965 in Lima, Peru) provides us with a strong jolt of tangible physicality. Best known for his sculptures shaped from stainless steel, the artist also works across multifarious disciplines including music, industrial design, editing and writing. His practice is all about revising and remixing - the elusive space between something ending and something else beginning, but his sculptures remind us that even when things are in a state of flux, something concrete can still be created or left behind. Danish-Icelandic artist, Olafur Eliasson (b.1967 in Copenhagen, Denmark) has created sculptures and large-scale installations using elemental materials such as light, water and air in addition to more traditional art materials. He describes his studio as a laboratory for spatial research, unsurprising considering that this is an artist who has always been fascinated with how we as physical beings engage with space, and thus go on to shape the world around us.

Martin Kobe's (b.1973 in Dresden, Germany) energetic and dynamic paintings depict complex architectural compositions that simultaneously appear to be heading towards completion while paradoxically deconstructing. They conjure up visions of modernist utopian fantasies - spaces that would surely have filled Corbusier's dreams - but trace each line from its point of origin to its end and it becomes apparent that they are splintering into infinity, marking a line in the sky for a while, rather than colonising or laying claim.

Anselm Reyle (b.1970 in Tübingen Germany) has purloined extensively from the 'trademarks of the modernist canon', seeking to bring new life to found objects, and exploring and exploiting unconventional materials such as Mylar foil or mirrors in order to push at the boundaries of both painting and sculpture. His is a space though that also hovers at the borders of cliché and good taste. Often provocative and confrontational he has chosen to defy and take risks rather than pay homage to his artistic 'fathers'.

Joseph Tong (b.1982 in Hong Kong, China) creates conceptual works through a multidisciplinary approach and a variety of media, which includes the elements of oil and ink painting, sculpture, photography, site-specific installation and media art that examine core concepts of the physical reality, whilst exploring notions of alternative reality and dimensional potentialities. At times, juxtaposing various theories, genres and processes within the confines of a single work, utilising geometric shapes and organic forms as the principal components of abstraction. A visual linguist, Tong uses and combines highly aestheticised materials – such as structured Plexiglas, dichroic film, Chinese calligraphy paper, and Latex. His interactive works challenge the traditional notion of the passive viewer, achieving a sense of tension between viewer and the work itself.

Shaping Space - like its diverse combination of artists and its title - promises a kaleidoscopic and colourful examination of a singularly relevant topic. Each angle is different, each position reflects a unique perspective - but all are all brought together in one multi-faceted exhibition.