

THOMAS SCHEIBITZ

Low Sweetie

Lower Gallery
4 June - 11 July 1999

From architecture to landscape to geometric abstraction, Thomas Scheibitz's energetic pictorial language is applied in a variety of styles. Scheibitz's paintings are rife with contradictions: he uses classical techniques and yet the works appear thoroughly modern; whilst revelling in a colourful palette the canvases exude an air of melancholia; he depicts complex compositions which also feel plain and direct. Scheibitz's paintings are enigmatic puzzles, seductive and aloof, drawing you in yet holding you at bay.

In *Low Sweetie*, 1999, at the far end of the gallery, we are offered a vista. The sweeping path which leads your eye to the horizon and the arched flowers on either side which frame your gaze, are reminiscent of 18th century landscapes. Despite this relationship to classical painting Scheibitz interrupts any burgeoning sense of the romantic or the sublime with a large flower, at the very heart of the canvas, which jolts the entire composition abruptly to the surface. The sky and land are rendered in the same, unifying, criss-cross of geometric forms and the same range of tones; the horizon is barely there. *Low Sweetie* is thus transformed into a closed and purely formal world.

Notwithstanding their formal severity Scheibitz's works are redolent with atmosphere. *Kinderhotel 99*, 1999, on the left of the gallery, presents candy coloured areas of paint enclosed in circular forms which are suggestive of toys and children's play. Yet the geometry is vacant and eerie, and the bright colours surprisingly sad. Our expectations of joy are confounded and the picture remains inscrutable.

Scheibitz's interest in architecture and design is apparent in most of his works and exploited to great effect. *Haus*, 1999, at the entrance of the gallery, depicts a modern tower block at the very front of the compositional space. The resulting flatness is enhanced by the decorative motifs on the surface of the image: the flower pattern and the triangle enclosing a purple diamond. This is in marked contrast to *Skilift*, 1999, and *o.T. (Nr. 182)*, 1999, on the far right and left of the gallery. *Skilift* is constructed in a series of layers, a mountain scene behind a large ski-lift, overlaid by a white grid, which serve to give the work a sense of depth. *o.T. (Nr. 182)* makes the most of fine line drawing and colour opposition to evoke an exploding, and simultaneously receding, crystalline structure. Whilst both these paintings are executed with the controlled precision of an engineer, the artist's loose and splashy painting also denotes a discreet toying with speed and incompleteness. Scheibitz plays with perspective, interlocking diagonals and semi-abstracted planes of colour, creating a tension between distance and surface, between the traditional format of landscapes and cityscapes and the coolness of modern design.

Thomas Scheibitz was born in Radeberg, Germany, in 1968. He graduated from HfBK in Dresden in 1998, and now lives and works in Berlin. He has exhibited at: Galerie Gebr. Lehmann, Dresden; loop-raum für aktuelle kunst, Berlin; Galerie Aurel Scheibler, Cologne; Bonakdar Jancou Gallery, New York; and is participating in *Examining Pictures* at the Whitechapel Art Gallery until 27 June.

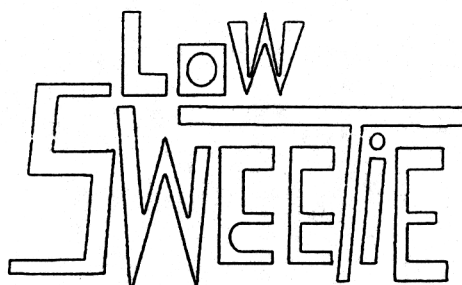
List of works: Front: *Haus*, 1999. From right to left as you enter the gallery: *Abteil*, 1999; *Casting*, 1999; *Texas*, 1999; *Skilift*, 1999; *Low Sweetie*, 1999; *o.T. (Nr. 182)*, 1999; *Kinderhotel 99*, 1999; *Rosette*, 1999.

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Amidst the prevailing international fashion for video, photography and installation, Berlin is home to ambitious young artists who are keen to revive the city's reputation for painting. Thomas Scheibitz is at the forefront of this group, many of whom were born and educated in the former GDR, and have now moved to the West. This will be his first solo exhibition in a public gallery.

Scheibitz has succeeded in collapsing a vast array of post-war painterly modes: from the bold 1970s abstraction of Viallat, to the drama of Marcus Lupertz, to the inscrutability of Luc Tuymans or the candy colourings of Gary Hume in the 1990s, Scheibitz has created his own energetic and singular language. He creates strange and highly artificial images that happily straddle abstraction and representation. Using a curious palette of faded colours, old fashioned drawing and perspective, combined with strong geometric forms and loose, splashy paint handling, Scheibitz's landscapes and urban views fizz with energy and drama. These paintings are not ashamed to declare their nature: the sensuous marks of the brush are everywhere, as are the tell-tale signs of overpainting. Yet despite their distinctness and broad sweep, they are emotionally detached, the subject matter remaining obscure and cool. Scheibitz's paintings are like games or puzzles, confusion reigns: is this real or false, inside or outside, big or small?

Scheibitz recently graduated from the HfBK in Dresden and now lives and works in Berlin. He has exhibited at: Galerie Gebr. Lehmann, Dresden; loop raum fur aktuelle kunst, Berlin; Galerie Aurel Scheibler, Cologne; Bonakdar Jancou Gallery, New York and is represented in *Examining Pictures* currently at the Whitechapel.

'Scheibitz is genuinely a colourist, creating wonderful, unlikely and sonorous chromatic combinations... It is his sense of aesthetic vitality and formal energy that are exciting and rare.'

Burlington Magazine, February 1999

An illustrated catalogue accompanies the exhibition, available at the ICA Bookshop from 4 June 1999.

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