

Ten Years of Innsbruck ART

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Innsbruck Art Fair.

The International Fair of Contemporary Art was held in Innsbruck's Exhibition Hall 4 from February 24-27, 2006. It was a cause for celebration, marking the tenth anniversary of the Innsbruck art fair. For this special birthday, initiator and founder Johanna Penz has deliberately decided to go back to its roots. So, "Graphics, Editions and Diversity" was the logical choice of subtitle for Penz to describe the thematic focus of the jubilee fair.

Penz recently summarized the original concept of the fair: "Contemporary art stands for diversity and a juxtaposition of countless varieties and forms of expression. By staging ART we are giving our public the opportunity to immerse themselves in this diversity, to compare the many thrilling styles and approaches on display, and hence to arrive at the particular form of expression exerting the greatest appeal for each of our viewers."

For Penz, the fact that the Innsbruck ART fair had developed into a genuine crowd puller and extremely popular venue for meetings and encounters over the ten years it had been running consequently meant more than just an affirmation of the course which had been adopted: "Right from the outset it was this broad popularity which gave the fair its greatest impetus. After all, we wanted to attract and reach people who on the one hand were quite interested in art but on the other perhaps shied away from the idea of visiting galleries because they weren't really sure what they were actually looking for or what they were really interested in."

Penz says that she of course is extremely happy that the tenth ART fair was fully booked out. "We have already been working here for years with a good and dependable circle of regular exhibitors. So it was particularly important for me to highlight these regular exhibitors in a very special way this year given that we were celebrating our tenth anniversary. After all, these were the people who gave their backing to our concept right from the start and they have always remained loyal to us. The network that has emerged and grown between exhibitors, artists and visitors with and in ART Innsbruck over the first ten years of its operations works well."

While some very prestigious galleries like Bischoff (Berlin), Benden&Kilmczak (Viersen), Rhomberg (Innsbruck) and Stock (Vienna) were present at the ART Innsbruck, one stood out like a sore thumb: Galerie KunstWerk from Wiesbaden, Germany, presented a breathtaking one man show of painter Joachim Hiller. In 2004, gallery owner Leander Rubrecht discovered Hiller, who 35 years ago had decided to hang up his art director profession and dedicate himself to independent art. Hiller nearly completely submerged himself in the world of artistic creation. Hiller's wife says: "My husband has only ever painted. Free of any bending over backwards to suit the art market. Completely unadulterated. He never would have knocked on a gallery's door. Creating art for art's sake!" Rubrecht along with his gallery associate Susanne Kiessling decided to represent Hiller, who was never before represented by any gallery, and initially staged a very successful exhibition in June of 2005. Rubrecht explains: "We think that the artist Joachim Hiller is worth being shown to a big audience and we are therefore seeking cooperations with professional galleries especially in the US." Looking at Hiller's work, that should not be a problem.

Hiller began his arts and crafts studies in 1949 at the Berliner Meisterschule fuer Kunsthandwerk, his ideals influenced on the one hand by Toulouse-Lautrec and the spatial aesthetic of the Nabis, and on the other hand by Bauhaus and the contemporary Swiss masters of product design and promotional graphic. Soon after he picked up painting, Joachim Hiller found his subjects: earth, air, fire and water. On Hiller's pictures, they very often don't appear as pure images, but wrestle with and penetrate each other.

Four equal canvas sides, four temperaments, four seasons, four directions. Four equal elements. Hiller's painting has dealt with all of them in the course of three decades, although admittedly, with variable weightings. No picture contains the holy quadrinity completely, because it would only cause its mutual neutralization.

Certainly the most impressive at the Gallery KunstWerk booth were Hiller's painted reliefs, a group of pictures of rock structures, executed purely in color, to the present day, Hiller's most comprehensive, and under diverse technical and formal-aesthetically perspectives always new and differently continued series of paintings. Initially the stages can be perceived as silvery mosaics of small areas: triangles, trapezoids, irregular polygons. Y-shapes pool together to form equally irregular larger units—obeying unknown laws. Every picture is dominated by its specific color scheme. The relief effect happens in the images through the way in which small areas are set against each other, here in hard contrast, there in finely graduated tonal values: they suggest a logical optical chiaro-scuro effects.

Back to the roots: The tenth ART Innsbruck has proven, despite of its small size and its lack of prominence, that not only size matters.