

Martin Disler*1979*

September 12 – November 1, 2014

Opening September 12, 2014, from 6 p.m.

“I want to draw and paint everything wrong, the unexpected line and the unbearably expected line; that’s how I make sure that they come from me and not from the great grid. Due to this struggle, life expectancy is quite uneasy, putting things increasingly into focus .”

– Martin Disler

For the first time, Mehdi Chouakri is showing works by the late Swiss artist Martin Disler (1949-1996), under the title *1979*, referring to the year the works were made – the period in which Disler developed his expressive painting, which left a significant mark on European art of the 1980’s.

Martin Disler is often associated with the painting movement of the 1980’s, the breakthrough of post-modernism and its historic references. His work, however, has a different background: the author was an autodidact, with a special relationship to language, writing prose and poetry (Pearlsbooksedition Zurich is currently preparing a publication of Disler’s “Die Versuchung des Malers”). Notable in Disler’s oeuvre is a powerful, even existential “chargedness,” an almost intoxicating rigour. Physical being, primarily that of the artist himself, is very much at play in his visual language. In his work are the palpable traces of the excessive and unsparing life of an artist – carried by a rigorous and overly acute awareness.

1979 consists of paintings and drawings from 1979 to the early 1980s: paintings made with industrial paint on Pavatex, an insulation material – “poor” materials, pointedly chosen as a blunt protest against an established, cultivated view of art and painting. The artist depicts pictogram-like, often seemingly abstract forms and shapes. At the same time, the paintings highlight Disler’s affinity for language and underscore his search for a new vocabulary. His earlier works, especially those on paper, reveal how strongly the historical phenomenon of “Ecriture Automatique” affected the artist in his beginnings. A selection of those works complement the six paintings in the exhibition.

The contemporary success of Martin Disler’s art is demonstrated by his biography. From prominent museums – such as the Kunsthalle Basel (solo-exhibition „Invasion durch eine falsche Sprache“, 1980), the Folkwang Museum in Essen, or the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris – to influential galleries – like Marian Goodman in New York or the former Galerie Paul Maenz in Cologne – and renowned private collections, the art world has shown a commitment to the artist from very early on. Being invited by Harald Szeemann to take part in the Venice Biennale of 1980, Martin Disler also took part two years later in Documenta 7 in Kassel.

The exhibition *1979* will be accompanied by a full-color catalogue.

Parallel to this show, works by Martin Disler from the late 1980s will be shown at Buchmann Galerie in Berlin; both exhibitions open the same day.