

Press Release

Isa Genzken | Love Michael Asher

Hauser Wirth & Schimmel

16 October – 31 December 2016

Opening: Saturday 15 October 2016, 6 – 8 pm



Los Angeles... Beginning 16 October, Hauser Wirth & Schimmel will present 'Isa Genzken. I Love Michael Asher,' the first Los Angeles solo exhibition for the celebrated artist.

Isa Genzken was in her late 20s when she visited Michael Asher in California on a travel grant from Dusseldorf Academy, where she had begun teaching in 1977. At this time, Genzken was producing sleek lacquered wood sculptures known as 'Ellipsoids' and 'Hyperbolos.' This minimalist body of work, which lasted through the early 1980s, engaged with spatial and social aspects of line, mass, scale, color and movement through and around the works.

Since their meeting, Genzken's diverse practice has encompassed sculpture, photography, drawing and painting. Her work borrows from the aesthetics of Minimalism, punk culture and assemblage art to confront the conditions of human experience in contemporary society and the uneasy social climate of capitalism.

In 1977, Michael Asher delivered small caravan trailer to the first Skulptur Projekte Münster. He had created sculpture out of experience, setting in motion his career-long project of 'dislocation.' In the years that followed, Asher's interventions in galleries and museums included removing walls and doors, or keeping a museum open 24 hours a day. These deceptively simple architectural actions sought to

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expose the structural 'givens' of visual display and disrupt any sense of neutrality promised by galleries. Over a forty-year period, Genzken's practice and Asher's aligned in surprisingly fluid ways, despite the visual dissonance of their output. Both mined the formal tenets of sculpture, for example the base, or support structure – whether a plinth or a rolling cart for Genzken, for Asher a wall, window or even an entire city. Both artists present us with alternative (and often discomfoting) environments and the critical tools to navigate contradictions around us.

In addition to her interior installation of all new works, this exhibition features in the Courtyard of the gallery, 'Rose III,' an 8-meter tall sculpture, modeled after an actual flower Genzken chose and sent to the foundry. The flower simultaneously defies and underscores the fragility and beauty commonly associated with the image of the rose.

Moreover, the towering sculpture brings to the fore ideas about the integration of architecture, nature, and mass culture. Genzken is focused less on the flower's symbolism than the possibility of conveying a certain shine and shape, even resembling the mass-produced fake flowers found in dollar-stores. An interest in materiality, the bastardized legacy of modernism, and the relationship between the individual and the world is evoked in this exquisite sculpture, delivered with the artist's unmistakable playful sense of humor.

About the Exhibition

For her first solo exhibition in California, Genzken presents an exhibition of new works in a range of media: wall-mounted collage, sculptural assemblages set upon pedestals and tables, and groups of mannequins from her *Schauspieler* (Actors) series. Anchoring these bodies of work are three unique architectural installations: a window from the artist's studio installed in an exterior wall facing the street, replete with a plant-filled windowsill and the radiator supporting it; a dividing wall from the studio with clerestory windows, installed free-standing in the middle of the gallery; and her own work table, relocated from her studio in Berlin and placed at the entrance to the gallery.

Three groupings of mannequins are situated throughout the gallery – a large group of adults and children, a circle of eleven adults, and a lone female figure posed with an umbrella bearing a Coca Cola logo. Outfitted in surreal clashing costumes, these bodies give scale to the space and suggest a dialogue amongst themselves, as well as interactivity with the other works. Spread throughout the gallery, these figures blend with visitors to create familiar groupings but also the requisite tensions in any human encounter. With their upright posture the models appear confident and act naturally, despite apocalyptic outfits: a lack of pants, spray painted torsos, or vision-obstructing headwear.

Several wall-mounted assemblages feature items of clothing mounted on cardboard, while other canvases evidence a trail of coins sunk into thick surfaces of foam and spray paint. Collages teeming with printed faces, celebrity photos, and self-portraits appear bound to the wall with colorful grids of tape. Tenuously held together and lacking a frame, they suggest one could easily add or subtract elements at any time. Genzken integrates photographs of herself amongst the wall collages, continuing her interest in representations of the body, and of herself in particular. One metal wall panel features snapshots of the artist from her visit to the gallery over the summer, along with hand written notes attached to the smooth silver substrate with light pink tape.

Genzken's *Geldbilder* or *Money Pictures* take money as a painterly medium itself, affixing coins of various currencies and denominations to the canvas. She uses the very tools of a profit-driven society in her most direct and literal engagement with its principles. Genzken disassociates money from its role as currency, and encourages an appreciation of it as a material object, as a social artifact, and for its symbolic connotations. The paintings include found objects from her immediate surroundings – a watch, a wooden hand, a window squeegee – appropriating items from her studio for their formal qualities as well as their contextual reference.

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The floor-based sculptures include typical but evocative household objects – Styrofoam, shoes, flowers, lamps, rugs and radios. Set atop plinths or stacked to mimic pedestals in deliberate disarray, these everyday objects the works come to resemble tableaux of contemporary society. Genzken's ongoing interest in modernist architecture pervades this body of work, as a reference point to the aesthetics of construction.

About the Artist

Isa Genzken has long been considered one of Germany's most important and influential contemporary artists. Born in Bad Oldesloe, Germany in 1948, Genzken studied at the renowned Kunstakademie Düsseldorf whose faculty at the time included Joseph Beuys, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh and Gerhard Richter. Genzken had her first major retrospective in 2009. 'Isa Genzken: Open Sesame!' opened at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, England (2009) and travelled to Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany (2009). Other important solo exhibitions include 'I'm Isa Genzken, The Only Female Fool,' Kunsthalle Vienna, Vienna, Austria (2014); Museion Bozen, Bolzano, Italy (2010); 'Ground Zero,' Hauser & Wirth London (2008); and Wiener Secession, Vienna, Austria (2006). In 2007, Genzken was chosen to represent her country in the 52nd Venice Biennale. Also in 2007, Genzken's works were featured for the third time in Skulptur Projekte Münster, Münster, Germany. Genzken's work has also been included in three Documenta exhibitions: documenta XI (2002); documenta IX (1992); and documenta VII (1982).

Genzken's US retrospective recently concluded its 2013 – 2015 tour to the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas TX, the Museum of Modern Art, New York NY, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago IL. From 2015 to 2016, a comprehensive retrospective was organized by the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands and traveled to Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, Germany.

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Gallery hours:
Wednesday – Sunday
11 am – 6 pm
Thursday 11 am – 8 pm

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Isa Genzken
Untitled
2016
Wall installation: tape, printed paper, mixed
media (plastic foil, cardboard on drywall with
glass windows)
544 x 293 x 35 cm / 214 1/8 x 115 3/8 x 13 3/4 in
Photo: Ekkehard Kneer