

## VLADIMIR HOUDEK THE MURK OF DAWN

March 8th, 2014 - April 17th, 2014

SCHLEICHER/LANGE BERLIN  
Opening Friday, March 7th, 2014, 6pm-9pm

For his first solo show at SCHLEICHER/LANGE, Vladimir Houdek (\*1984 in Nové Město na Moravě, Czech Republic, lives and works in Prague) has created a painting series entitled 'The Murk of Dawn'.

The series, which also lends its title to the exhibition, has been mounted in precise dialogue in the exhibition space. Houdek principally works in series and forges links between works in a series in the process of making them, without producing sketches first. In his abstract visual language, the circle is the pivotal element. It occurs alongside other basic geometric themes and often functions as the central mass or the point of gravity. The resulting depth has the effect of pulling the viewer in. This is also the case in the current group of works 'The Murk of Dawn', in which the artist revisits basic principles and reflections evidenced in previous series.

The individual works are limited to a predefined, reduced color palette. Alongside different shades on the scale from black to white, brownish-red hues and shades of blue predominate. The title references the juxtaposition of the 'murkiness' or 'dirtiness' of the color palette used and the precision and clarity of the geometric shapes in which the murky hues then come to light, evoking the sense of dawn's light to which the title refers. Houdek also construes this contrast as the coexistence of chaos and order, juxtaposing the stringency and precision of the geometric shapes to absurd, surreal elements.

The use of color is extended by paper cutouts affixed to the canvas, extending the medium of painting by including elements of collage. The application of paint and the use of paper sections is a matter of superimposed layers, which again makes use of a technique quintessential to collage. Vladimir Houdek seems to be searching for something when he paints over one layer after the next, adding one each time; it is as though through this exercise he is continuously deconstructing the deeper layers of each piece. The in part very thick layers of paint combined with the paper determine the surface structure of the works and gives them a decidedly tactile presence. In some areas, he removes the paint again, so that deeper layers are unearthed again or shimmer through. In the process, Houdek creates a kind of echo or 'mementos' of underlying layers.

Houdek's works reference the formal language of various currents in early 20th-century art history, for example the Bauhaus, Czech artificialism, the Russian avant-garde, Surrealism and Dada, but he advances these approaches in a very personal way, creating his own expressive painterly cosmos. The different geometric shapes in the compositions of the 'Murk of Dawn' series interact with and contrast to one another, generating a visual rhythm. They create opposing poles of calm and movement through the direction of lines which fall, circulate, balance and hover in front of an undefined background that at most possesses a delicate grid by way of orientation. The synergy of forms is brought to life by the combinations and contrasts making them sometimes complement, other times interfere with one another, supported by a playful use of chiaroscuro.

Houdek creates tension in his works by never letting individual pieces lose their sovereignty, despite being parts of a series they retain an inner coherence.

In 2012 Vladimir Houdek received the Jindřich Chalupecký Award for young artists.

Text: Kirsten Eggers (2014)  
Translation: Dr. Jeremy Gaines