

KUDLEK VAN DER GRINTEN GALERIE is glad to invite Julia Ritterskamp (*) as the curator of following exhibition:

NICOLAI CRESTIANINOV & HEIKO RÄPPLER „Freitag der 13.“ (14.01.-03.03.2012)

Friday the 13th is, pure and simple, the date on which the exhibition at Galerie Kudlek van der Grinten is opening. Traditionally, in line with (Christian) popular belief, the date is associated with bad luck and the day Jesus allegedly died. The morbid fear of this date even has an impressive name in psychiatric lingo: paraskavedekatriaphobia. Behind this fear lurks the idea that 13 goes beyond the closed duodecimal system and is a prime number. It is thus something singular, an outsider. Judas, as the—incorrectly—designated 13th disciple and a malediction, tops it off. For a long time in Germany, 13 was superstitiously called the “devil’s dozen”: the stock market crash, relevant cinema films, the near catastrophe of Apollo 13, and if we looked further, we could surely make up a considerable list.

But 13 is not everywhere a symbol of misfortune. In the Judaic tradition it is even a symbol of God, because it stands higher than twelve. For the Japanese too, 13 is a lucky number.

Thus Friday the 13th is, for a start, something that clearly polarizes: superstition vs. a sense of reality, good luck vs. bad, veneration vs. damnation. In any case, this date is not an indifferent or arbitrary one. For almost no one.

The polarization and simultaneous energy embodied in our exhibition title are in reference to the two positions we have chosen that are artistically distinct. While Nicolai Crestianinov’s pictures mostly evolve successively during the painting process, including the atmosphere evoked on canvas, in part, with almost haptically opulent mediums such as symbols, ornaments, structures and colors like gold, Heiko Räßple’s way of working and final outcome are radically different. His process for effectuating the formal idea must be exactly determined before work can even begin. Which is all bound up with conceptual questions and formal considerations while, at the same time, a delight in the material, in handcrafted perfection is played out. Color is rare in the works of Heiko Räßple; material and its epidermis are foregrounded.

Nicolai Crestianinov’s painting is for the most part figurative. The work does not shy away from socially critical commentary. Strong symbols such as skulls and the Holy Grail are mixed with the contemporary reality of a supermarket. Skeletons dance in the rhythm of a certain techno movement. The viewer is free to simply enjoy the pure painting or to enter more profoundly into the work-immanent inquiry into moral issues, the future and life per se.

Much more distanced but, at a closer look no less metaphysical, are Heiko Räßple’s sculptures: Do they owe their appearance to a positive or a negative form? Is the work made of lightweight plastics or heavy concrete? Does the mattress depicted offer an agreeable cushioning effect or does it break your back when you unsuspectingly throw yourself onto it. Behind this stands the old, but never adequately answered philosophical question: Is the world like what we see and take for real, or perhaps indeed quite unlike?

While optically different, behind the seeming dialectics there are also things in common: Nicolai Crestianinov and Heiko Räßple were both born at the beginning of the 1980s and thus belong to the same generation of artists. Both studied at the Dusseldorf Art Academy and each follows his own path

uncompromisingly. A digital visual habit is no real help in figuring out the different aspects of either of their works. An in-depth reading of their work is both a challenge and an opportunity. In this respect: it matters and is not arbitrary. For no one.

From the German by Jeanne Haunschild