

**CONCRETE****New Images of the Worker by Ralf Kerbach****Opening: Thursday, 3rd September 2020, 6–9 p.m.****At approximately 7 p.m. there will be an artist talk in the courtyard with Jochen L. Stöckmann.****Exhibition from 4th September to 24th October 2020****A catalogue will be published to accompany the exhibition.****Gipsstraße 3**

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Tues – Sat, 12 to 6 pm

and by appointment

11th September 2020

12 am to 9 pm

(Friday Night POSITIONS)

In an exhibition entitled *CONCRETE: New Images of the Worker*, Galerie Poll will be presenting images and drawings on the typology of the worker made by Ralf Kerbach from 2018 to 2020. The exhibition will supplement these pieces with several of the artist's earlier works. In all the works shown, Kerbach engages with the existential situation of the human being at work. Against the background of his origins in the GDR, and through an engagement with the doctrine of socialist realism, the artist analyses changes in the world of work.

The catalyst for the theme of this new series of images was the period restoration of an old farmhouse begun three years ago. Doing this work gave Kerbach, an artist and professor of painting and graphic arts, direct experience of the hard physical labour of a construction site, while confronting him with new building materials and working methods. "This brought me back into contact with a reality that I no longer experienced as a university teacher, releasing images to which I could only say: You have to paint them," Kerbach explains in the catalogue.

On mostly large-format canvases, Kerbach paints workers in a style reminiscent of sketches, open and reduced to just a few shades of colour. His *Demolition Worker* (2020) is in overalls against a bright red background approaching us with a wheelbarrow; his *Freelance Bricklayer* (2019) stands with a bared, muscular upper body carrying a trowel in one hand and a bucket of mortar in the other. As a painter, Kerbach views the automation processes of the working world with sarcasm: The workers seen in *Concrete I* and *Concrete II* (2020) threaten to themselves in concrete, and his *Pipe Fitter* (2019) has laid individual pipe sections over his right arm in order to increase his work output, with the effect that he becomes a mechanical puppet. Or in the image *Styrofoam Type* (2020) the human being disappears entirely behind this material, which is so frequently used in construction as insulation.

"The new paintings by Ralf Kerbach are a snapshot that tell us where he has arrived with his art today, and where drawing and painting have taken him over the last four decades. If Adorno is correct in saying it is not the artist who explains his work, but the work that explains the artist, then it is worth reading these images on the typology of the worker ... in their formal language and in the gesture of the figures ... as precise visual signs communicating something about how Kerbach now understands himself and about his artistic practice today. For him, art has always been a form of nourishment, an unceasing attempt to find self-assurance by continually formulating new visual signs as ciphers for thinking his existence, to observe and understand himself in his engagement with reality," concludes Eckhart J. Gillen in his catalogue essay.

**Ralf Kerbach** was born in Dresden in 1956, where he also studied from 1977 to 1979 with Professor Gerhard Kettner at the Academy of Fine Arts (Hochschule für Bildende Künste), when he was forced to leave the university. He then relocated to West Berlin in 1982. In 1986/87, he received a scholarship in Olevano and a year later he spent a longer period of time in Paris. Until 1990 he lived and worked in Valquières near Montpellier. In 1991 he travelled to João Pessoa in the state of Paraíba in Brazil as a fellow of the German-Brazilian Summer Academy. Since 1992 he has been professor of painting and graphic arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in Dresden. Ralf Kerbach lives and works near Dresden. His works are held important private and public collections, including the Berlinische Galerie, the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, the Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig, and the Museum Barberini Potsdam.

#### **Exhibition Catalogue**

*CONCRETE: New Images of the Worker* by Ralf Kerbach  
with numerous colour illustrations, an essay by Dr. Eckhart J. Gillen,  
and a conversation between Jochen L. Stöckmann and Ralf Kerbach.  
Publisher: Galerie Poll, Berlin  
27 x 21 cm, 48 pages  
Price: 20 euros

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