

GEORG HEROLD

14 September – 05 November 2011
04 New Burlington Place London W1

Sadie Coles HQ is delighted to present an exhibition of new works by Georg Herold. One of the most prominent German artists of the last three decades, Herold has long been identified as a key influence on artists in Europe and beyond. Both in terms of his multifaceted oeuvre (which spans sculpture, installation, photography, painting and video), and his sustained concern with the disjunction between appearance and language, Herold has simultaneously assimilated and given shape to some of the key conceptual trends of recent decades.

In his first show at Sadie Coles, Herold is exhibiting large-scale sculptures forged from wooden battens and canvas, alongside paintings made from caviar. The simple roof batten or lath has appeared in Herold's work since the beginning of his career in the mid-1970s as a physical and conceptual building block. It is one of a number of low-grade materials and found objects which characterise his sculptures (among them bricks, tights, tea strainers, and handbags). A number of these latest works depict figures in various dynamic poses. Their armatures consist of sprawling amalgams of wooden blocks, recalling a series Herold made in the 1990s of battens joined in jagged arcs which mimicked pixellated lines. Several abstract works are covered in tent-like skins of stretched, lacquered canvas which conceal their underlying structure while accentuating its blunt angularity. In other works, the bone structure is left exposed, as in *Untitled* (2008) – a representation of a figure leaning against (or spasmodically springing off) a wooden pyramid.



Herold's caviar paintings, which he has been making since the mid-1980s, epitomise his use of incongruous or displaced materials. While Herold has made a number of figurative portraits from caviar, these works echo the *art informel* abstraction of his earliest works in the substance. Like the wooden laths, the eggs are cellular building blocks: in *Untitled* (2011), they are variously clumped and dispersed to suggest cosmic or topographical expanses, while in a second large diptych three double helix shapes have been 'drawn' in caviar, reprising a motif that appears in Herold's seminal work *Genetischer Eingriff in die Erbmasse bei Fr. Herold 1945* (1985), where a wire double helix constitutes an oblique self-portrait.

Herold's use of caviar dates from the time when he expanded his range of media from the basic materials of his earliest works to include gloss paints, copper sulphate, caviar, and other substances. The caviar is dually precious and degradable, and this paradox extends to the appearance of the paintings, which are blotted and smeared with grease and yet possesses a seductive sheen. As the writer Reiner Speck observes, Herold's works are simultaneously characterised by qualities of *Gelbes Elend* (yellow wretchedness) and *gelber Engel* (Yellow angel), attributes which "bear the melancholic gravity ... indelibly linked to Vermeer's 'View of Delft'".

In line with his entire corpus, Herold's new works are deadpan and deceptively pared-down. They reject the transcendental or the overtly symbolic in favour of multiple and slipping meanings, conveying an irreverent attitude towards artistic forbears from Dada to *Arte Povera* to painterly abstraction. For years, Herold has been compiling a glossary of actual titles and working titles, which comprise names, numbers, towns, places, and dates (starting in 1950) – sometimes titled *Idioticon*, and published in 1999 as *Liber Librorum*. This index of autobiographical allusions brims with multilingual puns and coinages (*ars pro homo*, 1992 ... *German After Fourty-Five*, 1985 ... *Nonsense ist besser als Ironie* [*Nonsense is better than irony*]) and closely reflects the compressed, indexical nature of Herold's work. *Liber Librorum* also underlines the gulf between objects and their linguistic signifiers, and the potential of this to generate a plurality of possible meanings: Herold has remarked, "My intention through my works is to achieve a condition which is ambiguous allowing many interpretations in many directions".

Georg Herold (b. 1947, Jena, German Democratic Republic) has exhibited internationally. Recent solo exhibitions include 'Urs Fischer & Georg Herold', The Modern Institute, Glasgow, and major exhibitions at Ludwig Museum, Cologne (2007), the South London Gallery (2007), S.M.A.K, Ghent (2007), and Tate Liverpool (2004). Georg Herold holds professorships in Duesseldorf and Amsterdam, and lives and works in Cologne.

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Opening hours Tuesday – Saturday 11 – 6pm