



Perception of the Stendhal Syndrome

K A T R I N F R I D R I K S

May 9 - November 22, 2015

PALAZZO BEMBO - VENICE

GLOBAL ART AFFAIRS FOUNDATION / EUROPEAN CULTURAL CENTRE

· PERSONAL STRUCTURES - CROSSING BORDERS ·

ACCOMPANYING BOOK RELEASE: KATRIN FRIDRIKS - ARTIST COLLECTION (SKIRA ED.)



press release

2015

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Presentation

Born in 1974, Reykjavik (Iceland), Katrin Fridriks is an abstract conceptual painter, living and working in Luxembourg.

Fridriks fuses the natural energies of her native Iceland with an explosive, yet organic abstract expressionism, as well as with subtle elements of Japanese calligraphy. Often presented via installations or visual compositions, she adds an architectural dimension to her paintings.

Through a wide range of works, Fridriks communicates her questioning of the world, of human life, and of the future. Many of her paintings are in constant evolution, being constantly reworked as part of her ongoing research into matter and technique.

Fridriks has developed an outstanding painting technique that overcomes the limits of the medium, expanding it by the category of time: looking at one of her large scale paintings, a viewer experiences a heightened level of awareness. Although these paintings result from an abstract and intuitive process, they evoke associative images - wild creatures, for instance, or even the landscape of Iceland, Fridriks' native country.

In her works, Fridriks unites minimal and expressive gestures to create an explosive effect: the dichotomy of white paint alone on a black grounding, paired with her genuine style, gives the impression of paint splashing and swirling over the edges of the canvas and into the space of the beholder. Rather than capturing a moment in time, the painting epitomizes the moment of an eruption. On a more abstract level, this essentially relates to the evolution of the universe from a singularity, and to the origin of all being: it is this mode of energy that the paintings convey.

Recent works include perspective studies of her black and white series, "Gene&Ethics" and "Stendhal Syndrome", as well as "Crayons" and "Awareness" – works that gave birth to the "Riding Awareness" series.

Fridriks' working process leads to the enlargement of drippings and splashes, from singular strokes to the whole canvas, creating a zoom effect, which references the aesthetics of macro photography. By creating these new perspectives, her work brings an innovative dimension to abstract painting.

Having exhibited internationally (London, Berlin, New York, Los Angeles), Fridriks has received high-profile grants from the Ministry of Culture, Higher Education & Research in Luxembourg in 2009, the French government for the Olympic Stadium of Nîmes in 2007, and from private companies such as the Goss-Michael Foundation for the MTV Re-define project in 2011 and 2014, the Ralph Lauren Foundation in 2010, the Biennial of Liverpool and the Icelandic Art Center in 2008.

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Presentation

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„Dust of Galaxy” - 200 x 200 cm - Installation - 2002

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Key Dates

05

- 1974: born in Reykjavik
1974 - 1994 : lives in Luxembourg and Germany; following calligraphy studies
1994 - 1997 : presents her first exhibition in a Parisian-based gallery as part of a two-years residency
1998-2001: based in the United States
2001: returns to Europe
2002: meets Ernst Beyeler, Bruce Wolmer & James Goodman in Basel
"Dust of galaxy" very first installation / personal research, encounter & presentation to Hans-Ulrich Obrist, curator for contemporary art at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris
2003: Pierre Restany visits her studio
2003-2005: land art works including "Energy flow" and "Emotional landscape"
2005: first crayon composition, "Big equalizer", and first 3D installation, "Redlight district"
2005-2006: "Mangeurs d'étoiles" solo exhibition at the Museum Palais Bénédictine in Fécamp - France
2005-2007: "Red Sea" 80sqm fresco commissioned by the French Government and Ministry of Youth & Sports and the City of Nîmes
2007-2008: "Redlight district" and "BBQ" series presented at Sequences, SIM and the Icelandic Art Center, Reykjavik
2008: "Molecular Spaces" installation presented at the Liverpool Biennale, NICE08 and the Icelandic Art Center / creation of the "Stendhal Syndrome", Grant by the Ministry of Culture, Higher Education & Research of Luxembourg for her catalogue "Face"
2009: 1st edition, "Gene&Ethics" series / Land Rover commission, Artcurial & Fouquet's
2010: "Art stars" project commissioned by Ralph Lauren Foundation
2011: 1st edition, "Awareness" -metallic colors- and "Peace of cake" series for her 1st solo show entitled "Leak of Information" (Circle Culture gallery / Berlin)
2012: 1st limited, 14 color-silkscreen print "Gold & Blue Awareness" with Pictures on Walls - London
2013: presentation of "Riding Awareness – messenger molecule" installation during her solo show at ART13 in London with the Circle Culture gallery
1st 170 x 270 x 10 cm "Gene&Ethics" auctioned at Sotheby's London - Contemporary Art Day sale
2014: Lazarides Gallery - solo exhibition, London / group show Museum Arts Center Seoul & Auction MTV at Dallas Contemporary
2014 - 2015: Circle Culture Gallery – "Stendhal Syndrome" solo show, Berlin
2015: "Perception of the Stendhal Syndrome" – European Cultural Centre - Venice
2015: "Riding Awareness – Noble Eye Catcher" on display at Reykjavik Art Museum for "Just Painted II" - exhibition dedicated to Icelandic Contemporary Painting
2015: 2nd limited, 8 colour-silkscreen print, "Gene&Ethics" series – Lazarides gallery
2015: first monograph published with the edition house Skira

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Events

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Solo Show

**STENDHAL SYNDROME
CIRCLE CULTURE GALLERY, BERLIN**

November 22, 2014 - March 28, 2015

Fridriks enjoys a long-term relationship with the Berlin-based Circle Culture Gallery. The Gallery is known for discovering and exhibiting young and innovative talents: for example, it was the first to exhibit the now internationally renowned artist JR.

The exhibition "Stendhal Syndrome" at Circle Culture Gallery marks a point of culmination in Katrin Fridriks' work. Its title derives from her expansive installation "Perception of the Stendhal Syndrome", which at the same time constitutes the centerpiece of the exhibition. The work refers to Fridriks' constitutive artistic conception, which is to approach fundamental questions in life by providing a compelling aesthetic experience.



„Stendhal Syndrome“ - Installation View - Berlin - 2014

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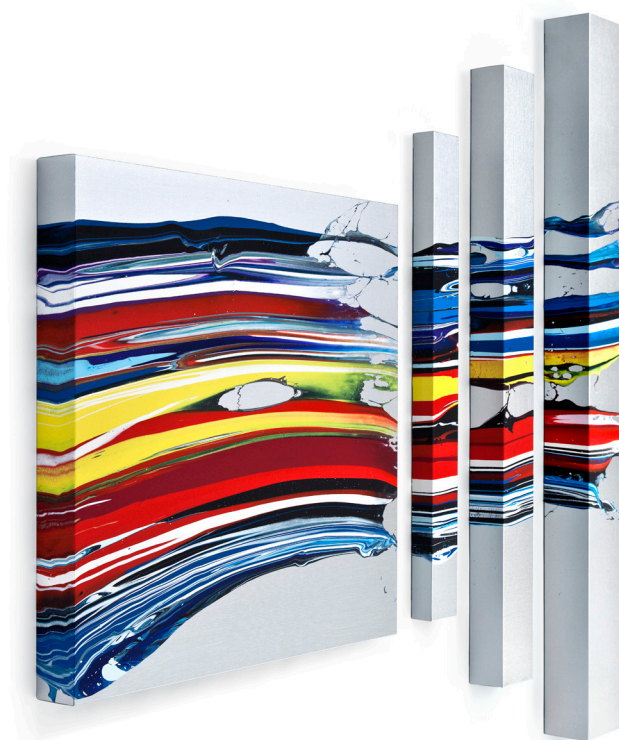
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Group Show
"JUST PAINTED I & II"
REYKJAVÍK ART MUSEUM
KJAVARLSSTADIR
March 28 - June 7, 2015

Curators : Hafþór Yngvason and Kristján Jónsson

The Reykjavík Art Museum, aiming to provide an overview of painting in Iceland today, presents two exhibitions at Hafnarhús and Kjarvalsstaðir displaying works by 85 active artists. Such an extensive overview of Icelandic contemporary painting has never before been presented.

In recent years, the medium of painting has gained an ever-stronger foothold worldwide. This new importance and emphasis on the medium have attracted attention to the diversity present in contemporary painting, and Iceland is no exception. Artists of all ages, possessing very different styles and approaches, have chosen painting as their primary medium.



„Riding Awareness - Noble Eye catcher” - Installation - 200 x 220 x 19 cm - 2014

*Work exhibited

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Group Show

PERSONAL STRUCTURES – CROSSING BORDERS
GLOBAL ARTS AFFAIRS FOUNDATION – EUROPEAN CULTURAL CENTRE
Venice, Palazzo Bembo #12

May 9 - November 22, 2015 | Opening May 7 & 8, 2015 - from 6 to 10pm

Organizers: Valeria Romagnini, Rachele de Stefano, Lucia Pedrana, Carol Rolla, Jaspal Birdi, Sarah Gold, Rene Rietmeyer and Antony Bond.

From 9 May to 22 November 2015, The European Cultural Centre presents its opening exhibition Personal Structures – Crossing Borders in Palazzo Bembo and Palazzo Mora.

The exhibition will present an extensive “cross section” of today’s art, with works by over 100 artists—both established and emerging—representing over 50 countries. Each member of this diverse group has been invited to submit work resulting from his or her subjective, personal reflection on the concepts of “Time, Space and Existence”.

Participating artists include: Carl Andre (USA), Daniel Buren (FRA), Katrin Fridriks (ISL), Joseph Kosuth (USA), Francois Morellet (FRA), Hermann Nitsch (AUT), Yoko Ono (JAP), Roman Opalka (FRA), Lawrence Weiner (USA), et al.



*Work exhibited

„Perception of the Stendhal Syndrome“

Installation: Magnifying Glass - 170 x D70 x 10 cm & “Gene&Ethics - Master Prism” painting - 180 x 280 x 10 cm - 2014

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2015: "PERSONAL STRUCTURES - CROSSING BORDERS" PALAZZO BEMBO, VENICE

In the context of la Biennale di Venezia 2015, the European Cultural Centre presents its opening exhibition "Personal Structures – Crossing Borders" in two of its prestigious venues in Venice, Palazzo Mora and Palazzo Bembo.

The exhibition shows an extensive combination of established artists as well as artists whose practice is less known—not only those who are considered "the best", but a cross section of what can be seen as art today. The artists, although mainly from Europe, come from many different parts of the world and express themselves in various ways. Visually, their artworks may appear very different. The common ground is the artist's subjective, personal expression of his or her reflection on the concepts Time, Space and Existence.

The exhibition mainly presents recent artworks by living artists, either site-specific, especially made for this exhibition, or originating directly from the collection of the artist. Some rooms in the Palazzi are dedicated to the presentation of a single artist, while others will host a combination of projects and works. Strong statements give each of the rooms a very specific character. The exhibition features a broad variety of artistic media, including video, sculptures, paintings, drawings, photos and installations. Since the more than 100 participating artists originate from very diverse cultures representing over 50 countries and are also of very different ages, the topics Time - Space and Existence are highlighted from unusual, very personal points of view.

The EUROPEAN CULTURAL CENTRE exhibition „Personal Structures - Crossing Borders“ shows the commonness and differences between Europeans in Dialogue with works of Non-Europeans. In addition, the exhibition stimulates a more conscious relationship on the part of spectators towards their daily surroundings, aiming to increase their awareness of their own personal Existence as human beings influenced by a specific Culture within Space and Time.

List of participating artists:

Marc Abele (DEU), Hans Aichinger (DEU), Gus Albor (PHL), Carl Andre (USA), Narine Arakelyan (RUS), Orly Aviv (ISR), Bruce Barber (NZL), Lore Bert (DEU), Bigert & Bergström (SWE), Simon Bilodeau (CAN), Maartje Blans (NLD), Ivana Boris (ITA), Eric Bourret (FRA), Daniel Buren (FRA), Stefano Canto (ITA), Norberto Carating (PHL), Soojin Cha (KOR), Manohar Chiluveru (IND), Paul Ching Bor (CHN), Riana Chow (HKG), Glenn Clarke (CAN), Michael Cook (AUS), Karlyn De Jongh (NLD), Herman De Vries (NLD), Iris Dostal (AUT), Carole Feuerman (USA), Antonio Freiles (ITA), Katrin Fridriks (ISL), Marc Fromm (DEU), Andras Gal (HUN), Daniele Galliano (ITA), Kristaps Gelzis (LVA), Beatriz Gerenstein (ARG), Valerie Ghossaini (FRA), Andrea Guastavino (ITA), Kimberley Gundle (ZAF), Ho Han (KOR), Mau Harrison (CAN), Ariel Hassan & Felix Larreta (ARG), Xenia Hausner (DEU), Anne Herzblut (DEU), Nam Hong (KOR), Dieter Huber (AUT), Walter Hugo & Zoniell (GBR), Lisette Huizenga (NLD), Helen Kirwan (IRL), Pep Llambias (ESP), Manfred Kielnhofer (AUT), Seema Kohli (IND), Joseph Kosuth (USA), Jaroslaw Kozlowski (POL), Beat Kuert (CHE), Guillaume Lachapelle (CAN), Sam Leach (AUS), Myungil Lee (KOR), Zinaida Lihacheva (UKR), Norma Lopez (COL), Michael Luther (DEU), Steff Lüthi (CHE), Manifold Design (USA), Louise Manzoni (BRA), Una Moehrke (DEU), Francois Morellet (FRA), Jalkhaajav Munkhtsetseg (MNG), Lee Nam Lee (KOR), Lili Nalovi & Jesko Willert (DEU), Houria Niati (ALG), Hermann Nitsch (AUT), Yoko Ono (JPN), Phebe Parisia (AUS), Ki- Woong Park (KOR), Mike Parr (AUS), Wolfgang Pavlik (AUT), Daniel Pesta (CZE), Triny Prada (FRA), Qin Chong (CHN), Saad Qureshi (GBR), Martina Reinhardt (AUT), Jörg Reme (NLD), Reko Rennie (AUS), Rene Rietmeyer (NLD), Veronique Rischard (FRA), Annina Roescheisen (DEU), Nicolas V. Sanchez (USA), Daniel Schär (DEU), Sebastian Schrader (DEU), Michaela Schweeger (DEU), Greg Semu (NZL), Amber Sena (USA), Jonathan Shimony (USA), Justin Orvis Steimer (USA), Karl Stengel (HUN), Martin Stommel (DEU), Mihai Topescu (ROU), Josephine Turalba (PHL), Guenther Uecker (DEU), Guy Van Den Bulcke (BEL), Marcello Vega (ECU), Vitaliy and Elena Vasiliev (FRA), Wayne Warren (GBR) & Jayne Dyer (AUS), Lawrence Weiner (USA), Dörte Whemeyer (DEU), Arnix Wilnoudt (NLD), Zhang Yu (CHN), Zheng Chongbin (CHN).

More information at: europeanculturalcentre.eu | globalartaffairs.org | personalstructures.org

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Monograph

KATRIN FRIDRIKS - STENDHAL SYNDROME
« ARTIST COLLECTION » - Skira Edition

European Release: June 2015
American/Asian release: Fall 2015

The first monograph on Fridriks' work, this 250-page edition by renowned the art publishing house Skira will provide a captivating journey into the artist's universe. Readers will be able to trace the past 15 years of Fridriks' creation and evolution, with a large focus on her latest and most innovative works, paintings and shows.



*Cover

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New Print Release

“ROYAL GENEÐICS” – BLACK SILKSCREEN EDITION
Lazarides Gallery, London

2015

70 editions - 8AP
120 x 120 cm
8 color-silkscreen print
Somerset 410gsm



*Print Work

„Royal Gene&Ethics“ – original painting 180 x 180 x 10 cm - 2010, acrylic on canvas
2nd silkscreen print edition

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PIERRE RESTANY'S LAST STUDIO
VISIT

KATRIN FRIDRIKS IN CONVERSATION
WITH PIERRE RESTANY

2003

Pierre Restany (1930 –2003) was an internationally known French art critic and cultural philosopher. In 1960 Pierre Restany created the idea and coined the term "Nouveau Réalisme" that united a group of French and Italian artists. Nouveau Realisme was the European answer to the American Neo-Dada of Fluxus and Pop Art. The group included Martial Raysse, Arman, Yves Klein, François Dufrene, Raymond Hains, Daniel Spoerri, Jean Tinguely, Jacques Villeglé - and was later joined by César, Mimmo Rotella, Niki de Saint Phalle and Christo. Restany defined this group of artists as sharing "new perceptual approaches to reality". From 1963 onwards, Restany edited the art and architectural magazine Domus and divided his time between Montparnasse, Paris and Milan, Italy. From the early 1990s up to his death, Restany took a growing interest in artists working in the areas of computer art, new media art, digital art and the world wide web.

Pierre Restany visited Katrin Fridrick's studio in April 2003 in what turned out to be his very last visit to an artist's studio before his death. He left this intriguing reflection on the young artist's work.

Conversation between
Pierre Restany & Katrin Fridriks in her studio (extract)

April 15, 2003

Pierre RESTANY: I just noticed something, are you in your blue period at the moment?

Katrin FRIDRIKS: Absolutely, I am trying to pare down the script by using a single color; I am moving into minimalist mode!

PR: It is true that it does give more sense to your research in "writing syntax" and grammar, namely your layout, sequences and sentences. You are developing a more global, more cosmic approach. The same applies to the emotional and sensitive side. It is a hypersensitive, hyper acute period, a true task involving the rhythm and drive in writing! The works that are connected with this period are arranged from the sequences and presentations that led to the large-scale canvas lying over there called "Deeply Connected". When this painting is compared to the more standard, less formatted works in the series, it shows a very strong capacity to affect and even stupefy the reader! It is the cut-off point where painting becomes writing. And I think that this writing that you are tackling at the moment has already gone beyond your tag art.

I certainly feel that it would be good to stage an exhibition on this blue period, because it shows the importance of gestural freedom and at the same time, your way of arranging sequences or verses within the flow of the subject or language.

2015

Finally, once again, as long as you have a deep instinctive faith in the expressive power of the language shown in your calligraphic works I think you will have a huge field of action and above all great freedom of expression. You do not need to worry about any differences because you are the one who is in charge, but the "inspector" or viewer must be able to realize that your work has to be perceived according to its specific expressive problems.

I noticed that you have this idea of introducing and associating politics through narrative with painting. You are one of those people who create language through gesture and word at the same time, and who are able to synthesize a vision. I think you are on a path that is right for you. It is part of your life, of the way you discovered graffiti, followed by this reduced language – "lowbrow" culture compared to "highbrow". Consequently, filtered through your own reflection, you turned all this into an autonomous language. In your paintings, there is truly a wonderful autonomy of language! The great danger would only lie in gestural reproduction, repetition in the gestural approach. Focus must be placed on the head as much as the heart. It is an interesting point because it is a problem specific to our era, and in painting, it belongs to a field of expression that is at risk, an endangered species.

KF: Do you really think so?

PR: Yes, because for us, in the Western World, it is difficult on an emotional level for an artist to paint in the same way as one would write; the way we in the West focus on the mental aspect in any situation. If you talked to somebody who had not seen in your painting the little note, the love poem, or what you were seeking to express, and if you explained your approach from a spiritual viewpoint, he would consider it a mirage because he would no longer see it. Once you have told the viewer "this is what it is, this is the course of the poem", from that moment on, it is all over. The viewer no longer sees the painting, he reads it.

Therefore, it is a difficult process, because we must not forget that we have come to the end of a certain type of culture, and visual culture in particular. We are living in a civilization dominated by the influence of media communication. In this civilization, a painting that tends to represent intimate feelings or emotions is perceived as an element of some past incident. So you are on the dividing line between script and graphics, between the gestuality of the painter and semantics. It is a very interesting boundary but one which must be accepted as such. It is a beneficial venture. I didn't think I would find this, I didn't expect it on coming here. I didn't realize I was going to see this in your work. I have a vague recollection of Eric telling me about your sensitivity towards script and writing and your contact with Iceland, but I did not expect your generalization approach to the problem. It is a problem that goes beyond the morphological imprint. It finally deals with the great problem of the eye. There is a good reason why there is an eye in some of your works, and why it exists like the centre of the universe in figurative work. Everybody has pupils, a crystalline lens... You are tackling a structural problem of vision, and I believe that it will become increasingly more difficult for you as our civilization becomes progressively affected by all the problems of communication. Later, you will certainly have a very interesting rear-guard action to perform because of your "religion"...

Painting is steadily losing terrain for the very simple reason that it is considered too static by the virtual consumer. This staticity blocks its progress.

The image of tomorrow that already captures our interest today is a television image: a flexible, mobile image on a fluid evanescent support. Therefore, those who can still survive today and basically represent active nostalgia or conscience in this vision of your painting are those who manage to have a great memory for faces (of portraits for example) or those who, like you, manage to free pictorial writing or the pictorial gesture from this torpidity into which multimedia and television have plunged them. All this is very interesting because you have already taken this on with your work!

"When painting becomes reading..."
Pierre Restany, April 1, 2003

“SELF-CONTAINED PAINTERLY EXPLOSIONS”

KLAUS SPEIDEL

Artist, theorist and curator, Dr. Klaus Speidel (b. 1979) was awarded the Aica France Prize for art criticism in 2015.

Action Painting is about confronting a human will to the laws of gravity and motion. Each successful painting thus is the trace of a victory of human will over the laws of nature. This is sensible in the final work. When Fridriks bends the flow of paint, she thus gives us a feeling of control.

Something which still appears to be essentially mobile, fluid, and even overflows, is literally arrested in each of them. Her forms look as if they could not be controlled. However, they have been controlled. They don't move. We are in charge. By fixing mobility, the paintings accumulate energy. This energy is released each time a spectator looks at one of them. Each time our gaze follows the path of the paint, we reactivate the motion implicated in the creation. The paintings thus work as storage devices for kinetic energy.

It is true that Fridriks' work can be likened to Abstract Expressionism. But strange as it may seem as they are abstract, it is immediately apparent that her forms and materials are those of the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, while Pollock's are those of the 1950^{ies}. But there are also deeper differences that assign Fridriks' painting a specific place in the history of abstraction.

While drippings dominate Pollock's work, Fridriks' is characterized by splashes, drops and language-like glyphs. Some of her work thus appears like a solution to counter what has been perceived as the perversity of abstract expressionism, centered on the artist's personality and expression of his inner self. Fridriks' paint looks like the paint had emerged from within rather than having been applied from the outside, like lava that has been frozen while it was still hot. Her education in calligraphy and her self-developed technique allow her to combine the expressive power of gestural painting with the calm of Zen art.

She does not only control the flow of paint and the way paint dries – using specific techniques she developed herself – but also acts as a trigger for natural processes, chemical reactions, which create fractal structures on the paintings' surfaces. These processes give Fridriks' paintings a quite uncommon depth. Her works are not only to be experienced from a specific, "appropriate", distance, where they may, for instance, have an effect of all-over. When we approach them, they do not simply disintegrate into paint, but give way to new experiences, unlike those we have when we stand further away. As opposed to what happens in traditional, representational painting, where when we "get closer everything becomes blurry, loses its' depth and disappears; step back and every-thing is recreated and falls back into place", as Denis Diderot once noticed about a work by J. B. S. Chardin – some of Fridriks' works become more representational when you get closer. The micro-level gives way to images that you don't see from afar. Where we saw a blot of paint arrested in motion, we now see a landscape.

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Where Pollock's works often look like walls or grids, some of Fridriks' paintings are more like primordial oceans, overflowing with colors that make a world, with droplets hitting the white immaculate canvas above. Others approach the look of spheres or signs that seem to hover in the air like the words that announce Belshazzar's punishment in the biblical scene painted by Rembrandt, and which only Daniel was able to read. Drawn into the air like this sign, Fridriks' painterly forms dance in front of the painting's surface and move into our space rather than receding into the space that illusionistically lies behind. They approach us, like a work by Delacroix, of which Charles Baudelaire said upon first seeing it, "it is as if a magical atmosphere had walked toward you". In other words : while they do not necessarily hollow out the surface to create a feeling of depth, Fridriks paintings are not flat either, and in this sense they can not be called neo-modernist.

Expansive and self-contained, of seemingly atemporal abstraction and reflecting the forms of contemporary reality, reminiscent of landscapes as well as Rorschach tests, full of demons, fairies, culture and nature, seemingly governed by both chance and mastery, analytical and synesthetic, Katrin Fridriks' works invite multiple approaches; physical and metaphysical, and much remains to be explored.

Klaus Speidel



„Golden Awareness n9“ - 100 x 100 x 5 cm - 2010, acrylic on canvas & 1st silkscreen print edition

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**PERCEPTION OF THE STENDHAL SYNDROME -
THE ESSENCE OF OCCURRENCE**

FRIEDERIKE SCHÄFER

2015

For more than a decade, Katrin Fridriks has been experimenting with the constitutive elements of painting—the quality of the paint, its support, as well as a range of unconventional painting techniques—in order to attain her distinct style. The unique interplay between medium, timing, and the movement of the artist's body around a canvas positioned on the floor all contribute to the fluid and organic quality of her paintings.

Although best known for her large-scale paintings, Fridriks' artistic practice began as the result of an early engagement with performance and land art. Both practices are also closely related to her quest for identity: born in Iceland, Fridriks spent her childhood and teenage years in Luxembourg and Germany before moving to Paris in her early 20s. The experience of cultural differences has become a generative factor within Fridriks' artistic development, inspiring, for example, the merging of organic and constructed elements.

The most decisive step in the evolution of Fridriks' fully-developed style (and one that also distinguishes her painting method as a performative act) is the placing of the canvas directly on the floor, requiring that she paint by physically moving around. Her most prominent forerunner in this respect is the American abstract expressionist Jackson Pollock. Building on his seminal technique, Fridriks has developed her own, uniquely personal practice: by transferring the movement and speed of her gestures to the paint, she manages to capture the very act of painting, thereby turning the picture itself into an event. The experience of working in real space-time for her performance art and land art pieces, along with her drive for technical perfection, have ultimately given rise to this 'choreographical' painting process. Yet Fridriks does not simply contemplate her own experience; she makes paintings that reproduce this shifting mode of perception for visitors to the enclosed gallery space.

The affective character Fridriks' current, large-scale abstract paintings immediately seizes viewers' attention. Indeed, these paintings are better described as occurrences rather than as static images. Moments of eruption, liquid matter gushing from deep within, small particles hurtling through the air, dripping all over the intense white, black, blue, red or silvery monochrome surfaces: every solid is liquefied and each layer is set in motion. At first one's attention is drawn to these perceptual effects and to the quality of the technique employed; only after processing these initial impressions of Fridriks' paintings does one begin to reflect on how she generates such a level of absorption among her viewers. Ultimately, this is the result of a long-term process of synthesis between her conceptual practices and her technical-chemical explorations.

CALLIGRAPHY

The starting point for Fridriks' long-term research in the medium of painting can be found in yet another cultural sphere: Japanese calligraphy. By learning this ancient technique for the drawing of a letter in a single brush stroke, Fridriks has developed a fluidity of movement and an appreciation for technical perfection.

In terms of her step-by-step method, however, Fridriks has developed, practiced, and synthesized a variety of different approaches that have freed her from many established techniques of painting. Certain elements that shaped her early works, such as the use of a paint brush, the act of making scratches in the paint or free-style underlining, have necessarily disappeared in her more advanced procedures.

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After working on a series of large-scale expressive paintings based on red ground, including the fresco "Red Sea" (2005-2007), and also her first architectural composition in the several paintings of "Redlight District" (2005), Fridriks entered a phase of technical progression, beginning with the "Monsters series" and concluding with her exhibition "Mangeurs d'étoiles" at Palais Bénédicte in Fécamp, in 2007. The latter, based on the book *The Little Prince* by French poet Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, demonstrates a privileged focus on technique and on expression through minimalist treatments—concerns that have subsequently evolved into Fridriks' distinct modes of painting. All works in the series feature a white, 1.50 x 1.50 m canvas animated by the effect of paint being caught while moving freely over the surface, forming wild, abstract creatures or characters from the story. By comparing the calligraphic outline of the "Monsters series", dominated by broad brush strokes, with the delicate technique of capturing speed and movement in "Mangeurs d'étoiles", one appreciates the quintessentially transgressive direction of Fridriks' evolution.

FROM DUST OF GALAXY

The photograph of Fridriks' first performance, "Dust of Galaxy" (2002), functions today as a self-portrait. Fridriks is shown in a fetal position amidst the innards of a large machine whose tubes and pipes resemble the internal organs of a human being. She is wearing a painted helmet featuring the first traces of her signature style, as well as a gas mask indicating the need for clean air in hostile environments. In the course of the performance she took off the helmet in order to hold it before her like a womb, an act that can be read at the same time as a symbol of Fridriks' birth as an artist and as an allegory for the beginning of new life in general. The title "Dust of Galaxy" further relates the work to the very beginning of all life: the emergence of our solar system, the basis for our human existence. It also reminds us that we all derive from dust and gas, and consequently, of the importance of even the tiniest kernel of dust.

ROOTS AND NATURE, ICELAND AND ENERGY

The island of Iceland is one of the few places on earth that still resemble these early years of our planet. Fridriks' work often makes allusion to natural events—the eruption of a geyser, for example—from her home country. Her unique painting technique enables her to capture the sublime force of the pristine, geologically active island without depicting events or scenery as such. She rather transcends experiences in themselves by capturing the essence of occurrences. Although applied to a canvas, the paint seems to have merely come to a temporary halt before continuing to swirl and splash over the edges of the frame—and finally into the space of the beholder. Instead of capturing a moment in time, Fridriks' technique elicits the impression of movement. On a more abstract level, this very quality evokes the origin and evolution of the universe from a singularity: this is the mode of energy conveyed by Fridriks' paintings.

To maintain a connection with her roots, Fridriks has adhered to the principle of allowing herself to be guided by the unpredictable Icelandic landscape. The pitch-black sandstone of an extraordinary rock formation that she came upon in a hollow inspired her first land art piece, "Energy Flow" (2004). Despite its solid appearance, the stone it turned out to be a fragile but precise collocation of black basalt sand—an example of the apparent contradictions found in nature. Fridriks' application of a strip of blue color, evoking water washing around the rock, thus represented an act of cautious interference, while serving at the same time as a reflection on the relation between nature and cultivated landscape.

The color blue is prominent throughout the works that date from this phase of Fridriks' intensive involvement with her Icelandic heritage; she even classifies this portion of her œuvre as her 'blue period'. The photographic series of glaciers in different shades of blue forms part of an investigation into the different states of the 'chemical compound' of water, another vital element for all forms of life. Iceland's glaciers, comprised of water in its solid state, also play a crucial role in today's climate change research, acting as recording devices of the past.¹ Fridriks expresses these ecological concerns in her installations, for instance in "Water is the Petrol of Tomorrow" (2008) where she juxtaposes blue water and a bright red car. More than mere wishful thinking,

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water as a replacement for petrol is fast becoming a reality: over 80% of electricity in Iceland is generated in hydroelectric power stations. Moreover, Iceland is the world's largest per capita producer of green energy. Thus Fridriks does not merely oppose nature and culture in her work: she underlines the correlating conditions.

In "Emotional Landscape," (2005) which also marks the beginning of her 'red period', she draws on the contingent arrangement of hay bales, all tightly wrapped in white plastic, as the basis for her aesthetic intervention. Coming upon a landscape of white dots spread over green farmland, Fridriks was reminded of singer and songwriter Björk's first band The Sugarcubes, which then inspired the title. The photograph shows a straight line of red hay bales created by Fridriks to draw attention to the otherwise unnoticed landscape. The color red can be interpreted as a sign in itself, even as the sign for a wound. The other shot of the scene reveals that the ability to perceive this perfect line depends entirely on the viewer's perspective, as it shows the red hay bales to be small spots amidst an overwhelming white mass. Fridriks challenges the viewer to alter her perspective and to relate directly to these landscapes, while becoming cognizant of their development from pristine nature into agricultural land. In these large-scale land art pieces, the artists' body performs the tasks of constructor, constantly moving around, relating to and working with the given conditions. However it is only later in Fridriks' oeuvre that she fuses the experience of her body's movement in space with the creation of an overall perspective in her paintings.

THE ESSENCE OF OCCURRENCE

The sublime Icelandic landscape is key influence on Fridriks' "Perception of the Stendhal Syndrome," (2014/2015) an installation that marks a point of culmination in her oeuvre to date. Building on her previous explorations into the human perception of space-time, the exhibition intrinsically relates this process to the fundamental state of being in awe of nature and of life.

"Perception of the Stendhal Syndrome" is comprised of one of Fridriks' large-scale white-on-black paintings from the series "Gene & Ethics" (1.80 x 2.80 m) and a custom-made, sculptural magnifying glass, measuring 1.58 m in height, which is hung from the ceiling at specified distance from the canvas. Upon approaching the glass every viewer perceives a wholly unique work, as even the slightest variation in movement generates an entirely new image. The installation thus simultaneously allows for a macro- and a micro-perspective on Fridriks' painting, thereby revealing the breadth of her skill. It is the literally puzzling and elusive nature of this experience that lies at the heart of her interests, as each viewer is instinctively forced to come to terms with her own position, in relation to both the work and to the actual physical space.

As the title of the series suggests, "Stendhal Syndrome" indicates that Fridriks' interest in the possibility of an overwhelming aesthetic experience though a single piece of art was already present in 2007. Her all-encompassing installation "Perception of Stendhal Syndrome" (2014/2015) goes a step further, providing the opportunity to approximate this experience: as opposed to viewing a conventional self-contained image, one has the impression of watching the painting happen before her eyes. This phenomenon is essential to the engaging affect that Fridriks provides to her viewers: even before contemplating it consciously, a spectator experiences a sensuous involvement with the artwork.

The term "Stendhal Syndrome" is a medical diagnosis referring to the overwhelming aesthetic experience that can sometimes result from the contemplation of a work of art. It was first described by the writer Henri Beyle, known better by his pen-name Stendhal, who experienced a seizure after visiting the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence in 1817: "Absorbed in contemplating sublime beauty, I saw it close-up — I touched it, so to speak. I had reached that point of emotion where the heavenly sensations of the fine arts meet passionate feeling. As I emerged from Santa Croce, I had palpitations (what they call an attack of the nerves in Berlin); the life went out of me, and I walked in fear of falling."² However, it was only in 1989 that this phenomenon came to be known as Stendhal Syndrome. At that time Graziella Magherini, an Italian psychiatrist from the Santa Maria Nuova hospital in Florence, named the condition after the French writer. In her practice she had treated 106 emergency cases of tourists displaying comparable symptoms; most of these had been brought to her directly from one of the city's galleries and museums. The only way to restore her patients to their original state was to remove them from the sphere of influence of art: they needed to leave the city and to return to real life. Fridriks'

installation refers to the possibility of this type of intensive aesthetic experience being elicited by a single work of art. By providing at the same time an all-encompassing involvement (by means of the large-scale painting) and an extremely close-up view (through the magnifying glass), she induces the almost haptic experience described by Stendhal, who in contemplating a work of art "touched it, so to speak".

Footnotes:

1. Victor O. Targulian, Sergey V. Goryachkin: "Soil memory: Types of record, carriers, hierarchy and diversity" in: *Revista mexicana de ciencias geológicas* (VI International Symposium and Field Workshop on Paleopedology), Vol. 21, No. 1, 2004, pp. 1-8.
2. Cited from: Iain Bamforth, Stendhal's Syndrome, in: *British Journal of General Practice*, December 2010, p. 945f.

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Katrin Fridriks
„Stendhal Syndrome“ – Skira Edition

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The first significant monograph dedicated to Katrin Fridriks, a captivating journey into the Icelandic artist's universe.

The volume offers the possibility to trace thirteen years in the evolution of Katrin Fridriks with a focus on her latest and most innovative works, paintings, and shows.

Born in 1974, Reykjavik (Iceland), Katrin Fridriks is an abstract conceptual painter, living and working in Luxembourg. She fuses the natural energies of her native Iceland with an explosive, however organic, abstract expressionism and Japanese calligraphy signs, filtered through installations and architectural compositions. Based on an endless exercise on matter and technique, Katrin Fridriks's recent works include perspective studies of her black-and-white series ("Gene&Ethics" and "Stendhal Syndrome") and of the metallic series "Riding Awareness." The progressive enlargement of her drippings producing unique zoom effects is like macro photography into her paintings. By creating these new perspectives, Katrin Fridriks's work brings an innovative dimension to abstraction.

AUTHORS

PIERRE RESTANY (1930 –2003) was an internationally renowned French art critic and cultural philosopher. In 1960, Restany coined the term "Nouveau Réalisme" that united a group of French and Italian artists. "Nouveau Réalisme" was the European answer to the American Neo-Dada of Fluxus and Pop Art. From 1963 onwards, Restany edited the art and architectural magazine Domus. Pierre Restany visited Katrin Fridriks's studio in April 2003 in what turned out to be his very last visit to an artist's studio before his death.

HENRY PÉRIER is a French art critic, independent curator and biographer of Pierre Restany. Curator of the Year of China in France in 2004, he was scientific advisor of the retrospective Zeng Fanzhi at Musée d'Art Moderne - Paris (2014)

KLAUS SPEIDEL is a German artist, theorist and curator. He was awarded the AICA France Prize for art criticism in 2015 (International Association of Art Critics).

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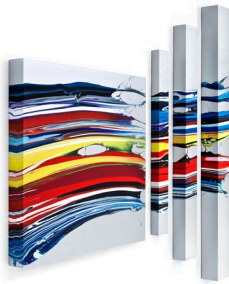
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press release

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Press images

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Riding Awareness - Noble Eye Catcher

Installation 200 x 220 x 19 cm - 2014
Acrylic on canvas
Presented at Reykjavik Art Museum (2015)



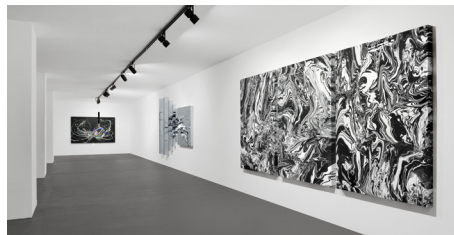
Stendhal Syndrome

Exhibition view - 2014
Circle Culture Gallery - Berlin



Perception of the Stendhal Syndrome vs Gene&Ethics - Master Prism

Magnifying glass 170 x D70 x 10 cm
Installation 280 x 180 x 400 cm - 2014
Presented at Palazzo Bembo - Venice (2015)



Stendhal Syndrome

Exhibition view - 2014
Circle Culture Gallery - Berlin



Dust of Galaxy

Installation 200 x 200 cm - 2002



Energy Flow

Land art installation 280 x 180 x 180 cm - 2004

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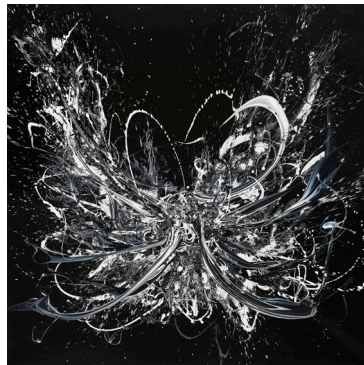
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Golden Awareness n9

100 x 100 x 5 cm - 2010

Acrylic on canvas & first silkscreen - print edition



Royal Gene&Ethics

180 x 180 x 10 cm - 2010 (original painting)

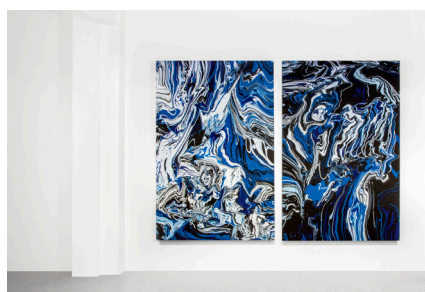
Acrylic on canvas & second silkscreen - print edition



Illegal Cloning & Brutal Gene&Ethics

Sculpture 60 x 77 x 35 cm & Painting 180 x 280 x 10 cm - 2013

Fridriks Workshop view



Blue Space Molecule Syndrome

Diptych installation 300 x 230 x 10 cm - 2015

Acrylic on canvas

Presented at Art Paris Art Fair (2015)



Riding Awareness - Messenger Molecule

Installation 250 x 370 x 14 cm - 2013

Acrylic on canvas

Circle Culture gallery - Berlin



Fly-Zone

Installation 160 x 440 x 8 cm - 2014

Acrylic on canvas & plexis sticks

Lazarides gallery - London

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