

Busch-Reisinger Museum Features *Stratification: An Installation of Works Since 1960*

*Contemporary works from German-speaking Europe on display
September 17, 2005 through February 26, 2006*



Sigmar Polke (b. 1941), *Untitled (Abstract Red Transparent Picture with Arrow Pointing Upward)*, 1990. Mixed media on polyester fabric, 117.3 x 137.5 cm. Busch-Reisinger Museum, Gift of AXA in honor of Timotheus R. Pohl on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the Busch-Reisinger Museum, 2003.63. Photo: Katya Kallsen, HUAM, © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

CAMBRIDGE, MA (September 26, 2005)—An exhibition of contemporary painting and sculpture from the collection of the Busch-Reisinger Museum is on display at the Museum through February 26, 2006.

The exhibition features seven key works made by artists from Germany and Switzerland (all but two of whom are living), in keeping with the Busch-Reisinger's mission to collect and display art from the German-speaking countries and related cultures of Central and Northern Europe.

Stratification: An Installation of Works Since 1960 borrows its name from one of the principal objects on display, Thomas Lenk's black Plexiglas sculpture, *Stratification 21A* (1967). Given to the Busch-Reisinger in 1979, it was installed for a time on the roof of the John F. Kennedy School of Government but has never been seen at the Art Museums since its acquisition. The sculpture anchors the far end of the gallery space and demonstrates the artist's preoccupation with layered constructions. The orderly stacking of flat basic square forms materializes ideas about surface, space, depth, and illusion, all themes that run through the exhibition.

Along with the sculptures, *Stratification* features five paintings and a rotating selection of drawings, prints, and photographs. Dramatic, oversized canvases by Gerhard Richter (*Said*,

1983) and Georg Baselitz (*Triangle*, 1991) dominate one wall. A mixed-media work on polyester fabric by Sigmar Polke, *Untitled (Abstract Red Transparent Picture with Arrow Pointing Upward)* (1990), hangs near Max Bill's slender ribbon of gold-plated bronze, *Endless Surface in the Form of a Column* (1958), while Richard Paul Lohse's vibrant acrylic painting, *15 Serial Rows of Equal Amounts of Color with Bright Emphasis* (1958/1987), is displayed alongside Rudolf de Crignis's luminescent ultramarine blue *Untitled* (1999).

“This small, focused exhibition of paintings and sculpture by some of the most important German and Swiss artists of our time allows us to explore the methods, both aesthetic and technical, by which those artists approach the concept of layering,” said Thomas W. Lentz, the Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Art Museums.

The Materials of Art

“This exhibition encourages viewers to look at and beyond the surface and to consider how the artists employ their materials,” said Celka Straughn, who organized the show as part of her 22-month tenure as the first Stefan Engelhorn Curatorial Intern at the Busch-Reisinger Museum. “Each piece reveals a different structure, application of materials, and overall physical process of formation.” While organizing the exhibition, Straughn corresponded with Richter, visited sculptor Thomas Lenk in Germany to learn how he made *Stratification 21A*, and consulted with several conservators at Harvard's Straus Center for Conservation.

Straughn, a doctoral candidate in art history at the University of Chicago, conceived and implemented the exhibition under the supervision of Peter Nisbet, Daimler-Benz curator of the Busch-Reisinger Museum. “Advanced, graduate-level internships are a key aspect of our educational mission,” Nisbet commented. “Celka has invigorated our engagement with the permanent collection through her identification of a theme, her considered and strong installation, and her research, which has turned up significant new information about some of the works in the exhibition. We could not be more pleased with the results.”

The Stephan Engelhorn Internship was endowed in 2003 to honor the late Stefan Engelhorn (1951–2002), a doctor, chemist, and patron of the arts. Each year, 8 to 12 talented individuals

with advanced degrees are awarded curatorial or conservation internships at the Harvard University Art Museums.

A brochure featuring images of the principal works will be available in the gallery, and books about the artists will be available for perusal in the reading area.

The Works

The touchstone of the exhibition is Polke's *Untitled (Abstract Red Transparent Picture with Arrow Pointing Upward)*. Polke created this abstract work by applying a variety of colors primarily to the verso (reverse side) of a sturdy polyester fabric coated on both sides with a transparent varnish. This work, one of a series of abstract "transparent" paintings that Polke made in the 1980s and 90s, "breaks down the physical processes of formation," Straughn wrote in the gallery brochure. Polke brushed, poured, and dripped paint onto the translucent support, mocking "the principles of the rational, modernist grid, stressing instead instability, mutability, and disorder."

Viewers will also see *Said*, which Richter created with fairly conventional modern materials and tools along with a more unconventional implement—a homemade squeegee that he used to create the yellow smears and speckles across the center of the painting. "In works like *Said*, color functions as the primary means to reveal the various manipulations of the artist's array of instruments, media, and techniques," Straughn explained.

In the brochure, the curator compares Lohse's canvas, *15 Serial Rows of Equal Amounts of Color with Bright Emphasis*, to Richter's painting, noting that it "contrasts dramatically with Lohse's orderly squares, but both use color to create an experience of optical intensity."

Supporting Works

From September 17 through November 30, visitors will see several supporting works by Polke that illustrate his multilayered experiments with different motifs, media, and techniques. From December 3 through February 26, photographic manipulations by Richter, Isa Genzken, and Valie Export will be featured. When not on display, these and other related works on paper may

be viewed in the Busch-Reisinger Museum's study room during its public hours, Tuesday through Friday, 2:00–4:45 p.m.

Exhibition Programming

Gallery Talks:

Busch-Reisinger Museum

Free with the price of admission.

Saturday, September 24, 11:30 a.m.

Karl Hinojosa, Harvard '05

Sunday, October 16, 2:00 p.m.

Celka Straughn, 2004–2006 Stefan Engelhorn Curatorial Intern

Sunday, October 30, 2:00 p.m.

Dustin Hodges, '06

Sunday, November 20, 2:00 p.m.

Solveig Koebernick, 2005–2007 Michalke Curatorial Intern

The Harvard University Art Museums

The Harvard University Art Museums are one of the world's leading arts institutions, with the Arthur M. Sackler, Busch-Reisinger, and Fogg art museums, the Straus Center for Conservation, and the U.S. headquarters for the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis, an excavation project in western Turkey.

The Harvard University Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. As an integral part of the Harvard community, the three art museums serve as resources for all students, adding a special dimension to their areas of study. The public is welcome to experience the collections and exhibitions as well as to enjoy lectures, symposia, and other programs.

For more than a century, the Harvard University Art Museums have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and scholars and are renowned for their role in the development of the discipline of art history in this country.

Location and Hours

The Fogg Art Museum and the Busch-Reisinger Museums are located at 32 Quincy Street, Cambridge. The Arthur M. Sackler Museum is located next door at 485 Broadway. Each Museum is a short walk from the Harvard Square MBTA station.

Hours are Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Sunday 1:00–5:00 p.m.; closed on national holidays. **Admission is \$7.50; \$6 for seniors; \$6 for students; and free for those under 18 years of age.** The Art Museums are free to everyone on Saturday mornings, 10:00 a.m.–noon. The Harvard University Art Museums receive support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. More detailed information is available at 617-495-9400 or on the Internet at www.artmuseums.harvard.edu.

###

For more information on this exhibition or the Harvard University Art Museums, please contact:

Jennifer Aubin
Harvard University Art Museums
tel 617-496-5331; fax 617-496-9762
jennifer_aubin@harvard.edu

Elizabeth Chapman / Casey L. Barber
Resnicow Schroeder Associates
tel 212-671-5159 / 5179
echapman/cbarber@resnicowschroeder.com