

Exhibition Guide

Christiane Baumgartner
27 July – 18 September
Second Floor Galleries

Christiane Baumgartner, born in 1967, lives and works in Leipzig, a German city famous for printmaking, not least because of the legacy of Max Klinger. Baumgartner acknowledges this tradition, at the same time developing her own very distinct art practice. She is fascinated by capturing and recording the passage of time, which becomes a recurring theme in the selection of prints and four video pieces in the exhibition. Interestingly, this notion of 'time' is also embodied in the way she makes her prints, using the painstaking technique of woodcut.

Baumgartner begins by recording sequences of movement using photography and video. She then reverts back to the traditional reproductive technology of woodcut. She traces the images she has documented meticulously onto a block of wood, which she then cuts out from the grain with a sharp tool. The block is covered in ink, the gouged sections remaining untouched and a print is then taken, often using handmade paper. It can take the artist months, or even years, to complete an artwork using this process, especially as she often works on a large scale.

The subject matter of the prints demonstrates Baumgartner's preoccupation with speed and travel; a view of cars on a motorway, aeroplanes on a runway, a modern wind farm, road tunnels and so on. The scenes may be familiar to the viewer, glimpses of cities and landscapes, but they are also strangely empty and static, the only evidence of human existence represented through machinery and other features of the built environment. They seem to allude to the romance of travel, at the same time depicting the impersonal and often mundane experience of travel in the twenty-first century.

Transall, (2002), is a breathtaking work, over four metres in length. It shows a magnified press photo of three cargo planes, aligned on a landing strip, the wings of each aircraft stretching across the entire length of the panoramic image. The horizontal lines, resulting from the artist's incisions, combine to make the image

readable. They mimic not only the way we read from books, but also the way we normally register the phenomenon of speed here on earth – the fact that from our points of view, planes tend to move sideways.

Two new works, *Brugge I* and *II*, (2005), are large-scale, striking images of a road at night, capturing the same scene within the space of a few seconds. The darkness is punctuated only by the glare of headlights from an on-coming car, the streetlights, the electric glow of a distant town and the illuminated road markings and signage. In *1 Sekunde*, (2004), literally meaning one second, the artist's point of view is moving and we see twenty-five consecutive frames that make up one second of video footage. Taken from the front seat of a speeding car, it effectively conveys a sense of movement through the blurry silhouettes of trees and foliage, highlighted against the white sky.

Baumgartner's series *Fahrt II*, (2004), is made up of eight woodcuts. Translated as 'travel', her subject is the new technology of the wind farm, the sleek, aerodynamic turbines appearing like totem poles. These images seem to defy the qualities associated with the medium of woodcut, having an atmospheric quality, almost like a painting.

Baumgartner's video pieces are displayed throughout the building. In *Speed*, (1999-2001), she manipulates video footage shot through the window of a moving car into abstract, horizontal planes in shades of green. *Floor One*, (1999), records a view from the floor, out through the doors of a lift, opening and closing as it moves through a building. In *Grid*, (1999), the camera is pointing upwards, through a glass grate in a cellar ceiling, towards daylight and the blurred movement in the street above. In *Stück Lautlos*, (1999), the viewer catches a tantalising glimpse of a summer's day through the slats of a venetian blind. These works also echo the woodcuts in their composition, with the presence of a linear formation.

To coincide with her exhibition at Ikon, Baumgartner has specially made *Langebrück*, (2005), a multiple in an edition of 30, 50 x 60 cm. There is also a catalogue, with text by Jeanette Stoschek, (Curator, Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig) available for a discounted price during the exhibition.