

"What You See Is What You See"
WITH

CARSTEN FOCK
SINTA TANTRA

PRIVATE VIEW 3rd of July 2014
6:30 – 9:00PM

4th – 27th of July 2014

Bright, audacious colours in geometric forms spread over the gallery walls, a wallpaper of precisely rendered paintings in hues of blue, teal, green, grey and bubble gum pink. Elsewhere, canvases burst forth with feathered hatchings of various colours, some producing rainbows of confetti, others rainstorms of thunderclouds. These two different yet complementary series play with and speak to the space around them, at once individual works and an integrated part of the space in which they hang. In 'What You See Is What You See', new works by German artist Carsten Fock and British-Balinese artist Sinta Tantra meld into colour abstractions to create an immersive synergy within the gallery space, running from 4th – 27th of July at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery.

For Carsten Fock, bold walls of colour inject bright hues onto segments of gallery walls, framing the delicate feathering of his brushstrokes. For the well-established artist, "the presentation of the paintings is no less important than the paintings themselves". Previous exhibitions have utilised architectural features such as slanted walls on which to display the work, part of Fock's ongoing exploration of how to collaborate with existing architecture when presenting art. The work itself, a profusion of semi-abstract shapes and forms, including dense hatching and increasingly non-figurative forms, belies an intense precision, drawing on a vast and complex accumulation of art historical influences, from Philip Guston to Barnett Newman and beyond.

In recent years, Fock has arrived at a stage in which, while he still integrates the surrounding space into the installation of his works, there is a much stronger focus on the paintings as autonomous beings in themselves. "From the very first works I made, before I went to art school, I had always been interested in the presentation and the context of the works," he explains. "Over time, my works increased in volume and size – I myself feel constantly in motion and reflection, which means I am also constantly shifting my focus."

It is this composite assemblage of art historical and cultural influences that has produced Fock's unique output, a visual tapestry woven from many threads to perform a new, cohesive whole. "As my old professor Per Kirkeby said, painting without architecture, without content, is stupid, and I think he is still right," he muses. "Without content, you cannot move beyond a simple expression or formal

meaning – that’s not enough for me.” Drawing on German culture, history, Pop art, and topics as diverse as the Second World War and the history of Germany painting, Fock’s oeuvre is an amalgamation of various experiences and visual and mental stimuli. He always begins with the composition itself, adding strokes and colours, an expression of immense freedom through the act of painting.

Fock’s colour palette also plays an important role, with a profusion of purple evident. “My grandmother was Jewish and my grandfather a Christian officer in the German army,” says the artist. “I was given Christian scripture lessons from an early age and discovered purple as a colour in the sense of the sacred as well as the spiritual. Other colours hark back to my heritage too, such as the use of ‘kasselbraun’, which we had in East Germany; it was the cheapest brown you could find.” His choice of colours also depends on the time of year and location. Paintings produced in the summer in Mallorca, for instance, are different from those produced in wintertime in Vienna. “Above everything, we live and we think – and thinking, for me, is what makes me an individual,” he says. “This is the most important to me as an artist and as a human being.”

Like Fock, the paintings that Sinta Tantra will display in the exhibition follow in the footsteps of her previous work – site-specific murals and installations that bring together considerations of colour, space, scale and light. They draw on the viewer’s engagement with the artwork, often working on a large scale and in-situ, harking back to the works of Sol Le Witt or Frank Stella. “I want to create a feeling of total immersion, of diving into the colour and into the surface,” she explains. Bold geometric patterns and colours seek to create “a more intimate relationship with what you see in front of you – an awareness of material and colour and the solidity between the two.” This immersive state creates a visual vortex of sorts, through which Tantra seeks to both seduce and repel. “Seduction enables one to daydream, to forget about words and to take pleasure in looking and ‘being’,” she says. “I use a variety of materials, from shiny to matt, solid to reflective – to physically draw you in and draw you out – going back and forth between the two states.”

For Tantra, part of her fascination with colour comes as the result of a unique mix of cultural influencers, with a background that melds Balinese, American and English heritage. Like Fock, she points out that light is different in various parts of the globe – warm and yellow near the equator, and harsher and whiter elsewhere. “My interest lies in ‘colour semiotics’ – how certain colours have a particular cultural significance for particular individuals,” she says. My palette could be described as a reflection of a narrative – my narrative – combining a pop-tropical aesthetic with the cool tones of an English heritage.” Of these tones, it is pink that plays a major role in her work, a hue that she has enjoyed developing as part of her signature palette. She pushes both the physical and cultural perceptions of the hue: “Pink is a colour that people either love or loathe,” she says. “It is associated with little girls’ rooms, strawberry ice cream, flesh, femininity. I am interested in coupling this ‘femininity’ with ‘masculinity’ – the hard edged geometry of painted lines, the vast architectural scale of motifs, and more ‘masculine’ colours to create rhythmic tensions across a space.”

Tantra also seeks to challenge our understandings of geography whilst playing on notions of globalisation and localisation by deconstructing what she refers to as our modern obsession with brand. "A brand is about creating a visual identity and embedding this in various locations, contexts and media," she explains. "Whilst a brand is 'fixed', most would argue that identity itself is 'fluid' and constantly transforming. I guess I am interested in playing in between the notions of 'fixed' and 'unfixed'." For her, it is the slippage between pictorial and physical space that opens up new ways of seeing the world around her, consequently challenging us to turn our thoughts inside out and allow ourselves to feel very much within the artwork itself. It is the act of engaging and activating the viewer that lies at the heart of her practice. "It's not just pictorial depth that I want to achieve," she explains. "I'm presenting artwork that needs to be viewed from different angles, different lights – on the boundary of a two-dimensional and three-dimensional world."

It is within the immersive, visually bombastic and intricately-developed works of these two artists that the viewer is taken on a journey into art history, geometry, architecture and the semiotics of light and colour – as well as a certain transcendence of being. All of these influencers come together to create an environment that is at once the sum of its parts, yet manages to render tangible some of the intangible.

Written by Anna Wallace Thompson

***What You See Is What You See* runs from 4th – 27th of July 2014 at
Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London**

Information for journalists:

Carsten Fock

Based in Berlin, Carsten Fock (1968) studied art at the Staatliche Hochschule für bildende Künste, Städelschule Frankfurt, from where he graduated with his Master's Degree in 2002 under Per Kirkeby. Prior to this, he studied art for two years at the Hochschule der bildenden Künste, Kassel. Selected solo exhibitions include *Towers of the Virgin*, Galerie Jochen Hempel, Berlin and *Sonnenaufgang*, Kunstammlung Gera (both 2014). Group exhibitions *Give Us The Future*, NBK Berlin and *Mimicry*, Costa Navarino Greece (also 2014). Fock has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2013 Arbeitsstipendium des Berliner Senats and several residency programmes with CCA Andratx. For more information, visit www.kristinhjellegjerde.com.

Sinta Tantra

A British artist of Balinese descent, Sinta Tantra was born in New York in 1979. She studied at the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London 1999–2003 and at the Royal Academy Schools 2004–06. Tantra is well regarded for her site-specific murals and installations, many in the public realm. These include works for Canterbury Christ Church University, Transport for London's Art on the Underground programme Platform for Art, Create KX London, the London Borough of Camden, the Southbank Centre, Canary Wharf Group and Liverpool Biennial. Tantra's recent international group exhibitions include *Gatekeeper*, William Holman Gallery, New York (2014), as well as *ICAD*, Jakarta (2013), *Identity Gallery*, Hong Kong (2013) and *NEST*, The Hague (2012). A recipient of many awards and public commissions, including research grants from the British Council, Arts Council

England and the prestigious Deutsche Bank Award, Tantra's work is in the collections of the UK's Government Art Collection and private international collections. She was recently shortlisted for the North Kensington Public Art award for a collaboration with Nick Hornby, alongside finalists such as Julian Opie. For more information, visit www.sintatantra.com.

Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

Kristin Hjellegjerde opened her gallery in south west London in June 2012 following her move from New York. The gallery showcases cutting-edge contemporary art from emerging and established international artists, with the central concern to create an intimate space in which an artist could present a coherent body of work within a focused environment. Drawing on her own international background, Kristin Hjellegjerde seeks to discover and develop new talents by creating a platform through which they can be introduced to local and international audiences and encouraging artistic exchange. Kristin Hjellegjerde also acts as an art advisor for both emerging private and corporate collectors. For more information, visit www.kristinhjellegjerde.com.

For further information and high-resolution images, please contact Kristin Hjellegjerde on khjellegjerde@mac.com.