

Daimler Art Collection

Information text for the exhibitions

Adolf Fleischmann. Retrospective

Dieter Blum. Cowboys. The first shooting 1992

April 30 – November 6, 2016

Daimler Contemporary Berlin

The Daimler Contemporary is holding simultaneous exhibitions by two artists who both have biographical roots in Esslingen in Baden-Württemberg, and who are also known for artworks produced in the USA: Adolf Fleischmann and Dieter Blum. The Fleischmann retrospective also continues the 'Classical: Modern' exhibition series, in which, since 2001, South German artists from the Daimler Art Collection have been discussed in a broader European art context.

For our Adolf Fleischmann (1892 – 1968) exhibition—the first Berlin retrospective of his work—we are exhibiting around sixty paintings, collages and gouaches. The central focus is on Fleischmann's significant late work from his New York period. Dieter Blum (*1936, living in Düsseldorf) was invited to a shoot for Marlboro in the USA in 1992. This resulted in a series comprising around sixty photos, only fragments of which have previously been exhibited; it was on the basis of this series of pictures that Blum became the most widely and internationally known photographer in this field.

In the context of the Adolf Fleischmann retrospective, we are presenting commissioned artworks, created for the Daimler Art Collection by Hartmut Böhm and Andreas Schmid.

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Adolf Fleischmann

An American Abstract Artist?

New Perspectives on the Artist's Major Works from his 1952–1968 US Period

Adolf Fleischmann, who is represented by a significant group of artworks in the Daimler Art Collection, was an outstanding German and USA abstract artist of the post-1945 period. As part of its 'Classical: Modern' series, the Daimler Art Collection is holding the first ever retrospective of this artist's work in Berlin. Featuring around sixty artworks, and spanning three decades of the artist's work, this comprehensive exhibition presents the artist's major work from his 1952–1975 New York period, supplemented by typical outstanding pictures created in Europe during the 1940s.

The German/English publication accompanying this exhibition will offer, for the first time, a thorough examination of Fleischmann's artwork in the context of the American abstract painting scene of the period. This publication—which may very well reawaken interest in Fleischmann's artwork in the USA—will include early texts relating to the reception of Fleischmann's American artworks previously published in the 1950s and 1960s in contexts difficult to access.

Adolf Fleischmann, born in the south German city of Esslingen, did not settle in the USA until 1952, when he was aged 60, but he was nonetheless soon acclaimed in the American east coast's "Mecca of art" as an "American abstract artist," as a genuine, original figure with a high standing in the context of abstract art, as inspired by Mondrian.

Adolf Fleischmann studied in Stuttgart from 1908 to 1913, where his fellow students included Adolf Hölzel, and intermittently worked as a moulage maker in Zurich from 1917 to 1928—besides continuing his artistic work. Prior to the beginning of Fleischmann's years of flight and persecution by the Nazi regime and the Vichy government (as a conscientious objector, an opponent of fascism and a supporter of the Résistance by one side, and as an enemy alien by the other), he spent the years between 1930 and 1938 happily and productively, first in Berlin, then on Mallorca, and later in France and Italy. He spent the 1938–1945 period as a fugitive in the south of France, in internment, and in Paris, where he made the acquaintance of a number of artists, and engaged in brief periods of artistic activity. In 1944, Fleischmann met Elly Abendstern. They settled in Paris in 1947, and married a year later. In 1952 the couple emigrated to the USA. A year later, Fleischmann found a position as a scientific illustrator at Columbia University. Fleischmann became a US citizen in 1957. In 1958, he left the USA for the first time to travel through Europe. By 1962, at the age of 70, Fleischmann was earning enough as an artist to give up his position at Columbia University. At around the same time, he became ill and was forced to undergo an operation, which led to severe infection. In 1963, the high costs of healthcare in the USA—and, more significantly, a number of planned European exhibitions—prompted Fleischmann to rent a furnished apartment in Stuttgart. Upon his return to New York in

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1965, he suffered a stroke. He moved back to Germany, and, in spite of partial paralysis, continued to work on drawings and collages until his death in 1968.

Dieter Blum

Cowboys. The first shooting 1992

Dieter Blum is known as an advertising photographer and photojournalist. However, he is also an artist who stages photographic series on specific topics, usually explored over significant time periods: national cultures, dance, music, the artist and the model, politics and economics, or erotica.

For the first time, the Daimler Art Collection is exhibiting the whole of Cowboys, a series consisting of around 60 photographs which emerged from a trial-shooting for Marlboro in 1992. These pictures, which have never been coherently exhibited all together, laid the foundation for Blum to become one of the most prominent photographers in this particular context. Dieter Blum heavily influenced the product advertising and documentary photography of our time. A short time later, his photographs became the “material” for the famous Cowboy images by Richard Prince—giving them, additionally, an indirect relevance in the artistic context.

Ever since the 1960s, Blum has been active as a photojournalist for renowned magazines such as Der Spiegel, Zeitmagazin, Time, and Vanity Fair. The magazine Stern employed him regularly to create independent photographic series. From 1972 onwards, he worked in his own private studio in Esslingen, collaborating with major corporations in the region such as Daimler-Benz, Bosch, or Porsche. In 1992, Dieter Blum was invited to the US to execute a trial shooting for Philip Morris. Shortly afterward, he was asked (as one out of a total of two European photographers) to shoot the newly designed Marlboro campaign. Between 1992 and 2004, he developed the iconic imagery still associated with the Marlboro brand on an international level today. Using a portion of the proceeds, Blum founded a foundation in Utah/US that supports unemployed cowboys. Several photographs from this series have been sold via internationally renowned auction houses for prices around 100.000 Euros each (Christie’s London and Villa Grisebach Berlin in 2007, and at the PIN Party of the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich in 2015).

Since 1968, Dieter Blum has been regularly visiting Africa. This reached its peak in 1974, when he travelled from the north to the south coast of the continent in a VW bus. Blum and his two traveling companions were nearly imprisoned by the Uganda militia under the orders of Idi Amin. Later on, he supported the humanitarian activities of Karlheinz Böhm in the region. The images from this journey were presented in a publication called “Africa,” in a print run of more than 20,000 units. In

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conjunction with this, Valentin Falin, ambassador of the USSR in Germany, became interested in Dieter Blum's work and, in 1980, commissioned a photographic series of the Soviet Union. Dieter Blum received one of the first official permissions for executing aerial views in the Soviet Union from foreign minister Andrei Gromyko. The publication "Russia" was published in a print run of 100,000 units for the European market. After this, several further books and portraits dealing with political or cultural characters have been published. In total, Dieter Blum has published more than 70 books to date—for example "Nippon" in 1984, "Auslöser" in 1987, publications about Herbert von Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in 1983 and 2007, and "Mensch, Schröder" in collaboration with chancellor Gerhard Schröder in 2005.

Dieter Blum gained access to the US market through shooting the European campaign for American Airlines at the end of the 1980s. To demonstrate the advanced performance of the airplane fleet situated at their headquarters in Dallas, American Airlines needed aerial views of the airport during rush hours. Without having any official permission, Blum jumped into a helicopter, equipped only with his courage. The result: fascinating photographs, a total breakdown of airport travel for 45 minutes and a huge scandal! Notwithstanding this, the campaign was a huge success.

The series "A Part of Art" from 2012 and "pure dance (Stuttgart Ballet)" from 2004 are crucial to the specific artistic context in the works of Dieter Blum. The collaboration between Blum and the Stuttgart Ballet lasted for several years. He created scenic situations in his studio and designed specific costumes for erotically charged pas de deux, and also took pictures of naked dancers performing incredible jumps or plastic formations. Dieter Blum dedicated a whole series of pictures to the dancing legend Ismael Ivo. Ivo directly compared the shootings with Blum with his collaboration with Robert Mapplethorpe, claiming that: "Blum mastered the time of movement in photography and immortalized the image in a genius capture." With its augmentation of bodily expression, Blum's photographic language is comparable with the carving of the figure as a sculpture in traditional statuary. For "A Part of Art" (between 1995 and 2015) he portrayed 70 artists in various different situations in their studios with a nude model, who was invited to the appointment without any prior notification. This series showcases internationally renowned artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Alex Katz, Sandro Chia, Nam June Paik, Robert Rauschenberg, Alfred Hrdlicka, Günther Uecker, Jörg Immendorf, Markus Lüpertz, Elvira Bach, Ben Willikens, and K.R.H. Sonderborg.

Around the turn of the millennium, Dieter Blum received a commission from Shell to create an image campaign with the intention of presenting future technologies through photography. During this highly international project, Blum developed an enormous photographic collection, which was published in parts in 2010.

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Dieter Blum worked with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra for more than 25 years. For one of his images, which was published in Stern, he received the ‘Oscar’ of photography—the “World Press Photo Award” –in 1982: Blum positioned the musicians behind one of the windows of the Okura Hotel in Tokyo. As they were immersed in practicing on their instruments, Blum captured this unusual moment from the opposite site of the building.

Blum’s first solo show was staged at the Munich Stadtmuseum in 1976, followed by exhibitions at the Kunsthalle Mannheim in 1989, the Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart in 1995, the Staatliche Museen/Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin in 1996, and the Frankfurt Kunstverein in 1997.

In 2003, the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg hosted the most elaborate solo exhibition of Blum’s work so far, showing a varied selection from his oeuvre under the title “Körperkathedralen.” The retrospective was subsequently exhibited at the Museum of Photography in Moscow in 2004. In the year 2015, Dieter Blum received the ‘Médaille Vermail’ in Paris, an award given by the Société Art-Science-Lettres to honor Blum’s life’s work. This was the first time this award had been given to a photographer in the society’s 100-year history.

Dr. Renate Wiehager
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