

DaimlerChrysler Collection

Private/Corporate II

Works from the

DaimlerChrysler Collection

and from the

Ileana Sonnabend Collection:

a dialogue

September 03 - November 23, 2003

Private / Corporate II

Werke aus der Sammlung DaimlerChrysler
und aus der Sammlung Ileana Sonnabend: Ein Dialog

*Works from the DaimlerChrysler Collection
and the Ileana Sonnabend Collection: a dialogue*

3. September - 23. November, 2003

Bernd und Hilla Becher, Ashley Bickerton, Mel Bochner,
Georg Herold, Donald Judd, Clay Ketter, Jeff Koons,
John McCracken, Mathieu Mercier, Robert Morris, Bruce
Nauman, Rona Pondick, Silke Radenhausen, Robert
Rauschenberg, Eva-Maria Reiner, Andreas Reiter Raabe,
Pietro Sanguineti, Haim Steinbach, Franz Erhard Walther,
Andy Warhol, Matthew Weinstein

Anything but flags!

Paris 1962: Ileana and Michael Sonnabend opened their first gallery in Paris on November 15, with works by Jasper Johns. They ignored a well-meant piece of advice from their friend René Drouin to show "anything but flags": the exhibition brought together a total of six of Johns's Flags, created between 1955 and 1962. The majority of the art critics responded to the work with disinterest or even hostility. They did not like American art invading the French capital. Much has been written about this story of how the Ileana Sonnabend Gallery started; it is now over forty years old. Given the luxury of a retrospective look at over 500 exhibitions that have been shown down to the present day, there is no question that we can now identify the Sonnabends' unwavering approach at the time as something that shaped their work both as gallery owners and as collectors. And when two of the most important European art collectors, Giuseppe Panza di Biumo and Peter Ludwig, say quite openly that it was not unusual for Ileana Sonnabend as a dealer to act in competition with their collectors, they are in fact expressing unqualified respect on behalf of many leading personalities in the art world, which means a great deal more than a list of superlatives trying to describe Ileana Sonnabend's collection. At the same time it is more than clear that both the Sonnabend Gallery and the Sonnabend Collection developed from a common, very personally motivated interest: no distinction was made between saleable and collectable art: there were art and artists whose cause they supported, who they kept in touch with on a friendly footing, and whose work they tried to promote. In alliance with Leo Castelli, her first husband - a mentor at first, and then a dialogue partner over the years - Ileana Sonnabend had discovered and promoted Pop Art artists like Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg at an early stage, from as early as 1954, in New York. The purchase of Jasper Johns' Figure 1 marked the beginning of the collection, in 1957. When she moved to Paris, Ileana, with her second husband, Michael Sonnabend, established Pop Art Américaine in Europe: in 1963, under this exhibition title - a year after making a start with Johns' Flags -, she showed Lee Bontecou, Claes Oldenbourg, Andy Warhol, James Rosenquist, John Chamberlain and Tom Wesselmann. The reason Andy Warhol travelled to Paris for the first time in 1965, spending time there on a number of subsequent occasions, was his Flowers exhibition, which filled the Galerie Sonnabend's rooms with the 20th century's most famous flower motif, in the form of about 400 exhibits, from the miniature to the large-scale format. By the mid 1960s, American Pop Art had established itself to the extent that Robert Rauschenberg was the first American ever to win the major prize at the 32nd Venice Biennale, and in subsequent years exhibitions and purchases became a possibility for major European exhibitions: the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, the Whitechapel Art Gallery London, the Moderna Museet Stockholm, the Kunsthalle Bern and the Boymans van Beuningen Museum Rotterdam became showcases for Pop Art. Its international and continuing success story, which finally also led in 1986 to commissions from Andy Warhol by what was then Daimler-Benz AG and in



Weiterer Schwerpunkt der Sammlung Sonnabend sind Werke von A. R. Penck (hier: Belagerung und Einnahme von Beirut 2, 1982) und Anselm Kiefer



Another focus of the Sonnabend collection are works by A. R. Penck and Anselm Kiefer (here: Der Ölberg, 1980)

1998 to the purchase of Robert Rauschenberg's riding bikes for the DaimlerChrysler Collection's sculptures in Potsdamer Platz, Berlin, actually started in the Sonnabend Gallery in Paris.

But Ileana Sonnabend did not just devote herself to the Pop Art success story, she was also passionately interested in Minimalism, Process and Concept Art and Arte Povera: Michelangelo Pistoletto, Giovanni Anselmo, Pier Paolo Calzolari and Gilberto Zorio were shown in her Paris gallery, and so were Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Mel Bochner and John McCracken, to name only a few. And so of course the Sonnabend collection took on a very sophisticated slant: its preference for and interest in Object Art, Concept Art and installations makes the collection into an interface for the mutual influence between European and American developments.

Just as Ileana Sonnabend conquered Europe for her American artists in the early 60s, from 1970, when she returned to New York, European art acquired an important platform in America. The first presentation of Mario Merz's work was in April/May 1970. This was also the first appearance for this works based on the Fibonacci number sequence. Ileana moved galleries in 1971, moving into an old paper factory at 420 West Broadway in Downtown New York, with the gallery-owners Castelli, Weber and Emmerich. SoHo was soon to become the art world's international meeting place. Ileana Sonnabend and Antonio Homem continued to run the Paris gallery, and so American and European concepts, ideas, common features and conflicts remained universally within the focus of her exhibition activities: in the next few years, she showed Bernd und Hilla Becher, Piero Manzoni, Vito Acconci, Anne & Patrick Poirier, Christian Boltanski, Jannis Kounellis and John Baldessari in New York. This meant that photography also found its way into Sonnabend's gallery and collection in the early 70s, even though generally speaking the appreciation of photography as an art form was still in its infancy at this time. Once again, Ileana Sonnabend is a pioneer in promoting it. But it was not just the extraordinary exhibitions, including the legendary 1971 Singing Sculpture performance by the British artist duo Gilbert & George, which was repeated 20 years later, that gave the gallery its lasting impact for her artists, she also founded the Sonnabend Press under the direction of Germano Celant and the advanced Castelli-Sonnabend Tapes and Films. A monograph about Piero Manzoni appeared, and the first publication of any kind on Giulio Paolini. These labour-intensive initiatives also led to increasing concentration of gallery activities in New York in the late 70s. And: New York had established itself as an art metropolis. Ileana Sonnabend closed her Paris gallery at the end of May 1980.

In the late 1970s exhibitions in the New York gallery were dominated by concept-based photography and also installations and performances, but in the early 80s the scene was dominated by Germany's Junge Wilde for a time: between 1982 and 1986, Sonnabend showed



Jeff Koons, Balloon Flower, 1995-99
Potsdamer Platz, Berlin
Sammlung/Collection DaimlerChrysler



Robert Rauschenberg, riding bikes, 1998
Potsdamer Platz, Berlin
Sammlung/Collection DaimlerChrysler



**Jeff Koons, Sonnabend Gallery
420 West Broadway, New York 1988**

work by Jörg Immendorff, Peter Bömmels, Volker Tannert, Hans Peter Adamski, Albert Oehlen and Jiri Georg Dokoupil. But the attention paid to these artists' expressive, figurative painting and sculpture is more of an intermezzo taking account of developments in Germany; it had little influence on the thematic line taken by the gallery and the collection. Things were very different with the Neo-Conceptualists, to whom attention was increasingly paid from the early 80s onwards. These were artists known as East Village enfants terribles like Ashley Bickerton, Jeff Koons, Peter Halley and Meyer Vaisman, whom Ileana showed together in an extremely controversial exhibition in 1986. These four artists cannot be defined as a complete group, but their work has aspects in common that correspond with the Sonnabend gallery's and collection's discursively directed interests. Bickerton, Koons and Meyer Vaisman relate to the commodity economy and consumer culture, and have excellent forerunners in the works of Pop Art. Bickerton responds with mordant criticism to the capitalization of the art market that became noticeable in the 1980s. Koons reaction involved a coolly calculated aesthetic first of all, and then he came up with highly stylized art objects quoting the omnipresent flood of knick-knacks, which he refined by using high-quality materials or produced on a larger-than-life scale. Jeff Koons's Balloon Flower from the DaimlerChrysler Collection in Potsdamer Platz can be seen as a representative work here.



**Retrospektive/Retrospective Show: Andy Warhol, Ashley Bickerton, Haim Steinbach, Arman
Sonnabend Gallery, 536 West 22nd Street, New York 2000**

Haim Steinbach, who has been keenly concerned with everyday objects since 1979, and links these aesthetically with the ideas of Minimalism and Structuralism, was also shown by Sonnabend from the mid 1980s. He was followed by Fischli & Weiss, Clay Ketter, Matthew Weinstein, Rona Pondick and Wim Delvoye, who found their way into the Sonnabend Collection. Some of them are now being shown in DaimlerChrysler Contemporary and starting up a dialogue with works from the DaimlerChrysler Collection. All the artists of the 1980s generation exhibited and collected by Ileana Sonnabend can be seen to show interest in the art she promoted from the outset, whether by quoting it or revising it, through ironic refraction and by affirmative or critical strategies that can be discerned in the works. The outstanding works in Ileana Sonnabend's Collection reveal some relevant patterns from 20th century art history: the triumphal story of the effect made by the ready-made, the extraordinary conflict about the postulate of Minimalism, and also artists' self-questioning and self-mirroring in their social role, whether they are reflecting on it critically or happily accepting it. As a contemporary witness of many of the last century's 'isms', Ileana Sonnabend never lost her overview of the highways and byways of art, as her collection shows seismographically. As an American in Europe or a European in New York, she set standards and made art history.

Rona Pondick

*1952 in Brooklyn, New York, USA

lebt/lives in New York, USA

Rona Pondicks *Dog*, 2000, ist eine der Skulpturen der Künstlerin, bei der extrem komplizierte technische Abläufe genutzt werden, um Formen von atemberaubender Unmittelbarkeit und Surrealität herzustellen. Pondick verwendet Digitaltechnologie, um Arbeiten zu schaffen, die aus hochglanzpoliertem Stahl, Bronze, Aluminium und Industriekautschuk gefertigt werden. Die Skulpturen kombinieren Abgüsse vom Kopf der Künstlerin mit Körperteilen von Tieren (wie bei *Fuchs*, *Murmeltier*, *Affe* und *Puma*, um nur einige zu nennen). Die unwirkliche Glätte und die nahtlos zusammengesetzten Formen der Stücke tragen keine Spur der Umarbeitung, was wesentlich für Pondicks kompromissloses Vorgehen ist. Die ausgestreckten Arme von *Dog* stehen in eigenartigem Verhältnis zu dem etwas zu klein geratenen Körper. Noch unangenehmer ist das Zusammentreffen dieser glänzenden Körperteile mit den präzise gestalteten Händen und dem Kopf, der entschlossen ins Leere blickt. Diese erbärmliche Missbildung wurde in skulpturaler Form unsterblich gemacht: *Dog*, eine Kreatur, die niemals sein sollte, ist nun dauerhaft schimmernd für die Ewigkeit bewahrt.

Ein Aspekt der Skulptur, der vor allem von der Künstlergeneration des Minimalismus betont wurde, bei der Pondick ihre formale Ausbildung erhielt, ist deren Zeitlichkeit. Herkömmlicherweise nehmen wir Skulptur als etwas Anwachsendes wahr, ihre zahlreichen Dimensionen und Details addieren sich nach und nach zu einem komplex wahrnehmbaren Daten. Für viele Werke der Minimal Art jedoch gilt eine unmittelbare und ganzheitliche Wahrnehmung. Entweder dehnt sich eine Skulptur in der Zeit aus oder sie löscht Zeit aus. *Dog* macht beides: das Werk zeigt sich mit einer schockierenden Unheimlichkeit, als ob wir irgendwo in unserem Kopf davon wüssten, dass solch eine Form existiert. Gleichzeitig scheint es einem Drama anzuhören, das sich langsam in der Vorstellung des Betrachters entfaltet. Die Skulptur schaut zurück auf die mythischen halb Mensch/halb Tier Hybriden der klassischen Kunst und zu den Einbildungen, die zu unserer eigenen dichtenden, fabulierenden Kindheit gehören. Wie ein Fragment aus einer anderen Welt arbeitet *Dog* in einer konzentrierten, metonymischen Weise, ein Teil steht für ein großes Ganzes, das uns eigenartig bekannt vorkommt. Indem sie solch atavistische Visionen in zeitgenössische Begriffe bringt, fordert Pondick uns auf, den Ursprung kulturell vermittelter Ängste und Wünsche zu bedenken. Warum besitzen mythologische Biester immer noch eine Spur ihrer ursprünglichen Wirkung? Warum kehren kindliche Phantasien in unsere erwachsene Vorstellungswelt zurück? In Pondicks Werk sind unterdrückte Wünsche und grundlegende Impulse in Ansätzen sichtbar gemacht, mit der Folge, dass sie sowohl bekannt als auch Angst erregend sind.

R.H.

Rona Pondick's Dog, 2000, is one of the artist's sculptures that use extremely difficult technical processes to produce forms of breathtaking immediacy and surreality. Pondick uses digital technology to create works made of highly polished stainless steel, bronze, aluminum, and industrial rubber. The sculptures combine life casts of the artist's head and body parts with images of animals (as in Fox, Marmot, Monkey, and Cougar, to name a few). The unreal smoothness and seamlessly composite form of the pieces bear no trace of the reworkings that are essential to Pondick's uncompromising process. The outstretched arms of Dog are oddly out of proportion to the slightly undersize body. Even more jarring is the conjunction of these glistening limbs with the precisely rendered hands and the head, which stares unflinchingly into empty space. This wretched miscreation has been immortalized in sculptural form: Dog, a creature that should never have been, is now permanently, glowingly preserved for posterity.

One aspect of sculpture particularly stressed by artists of the Minimalist generation, with whom Pondick received her formal training, is its temporal nature. Traditionally, we perceive sculpture incrementally, its various dimensions and details adding gradually to a bank of perceptual data. In the case of much Minimalist sculpture, however, the use of simple geometric forms allows perception to happen all at once. Either a sculpture distends in time, or it all but erases time. Dog does both: the work presents itself with a shocking uncanniness, as if somewhere in our mind, we already knew that such a form existed. At the same time it seems to belong to a drama that slowly unfolds in the viewer's imagination. The sculpture looks backward, to the mythological halfman, half-beast hybrids of classical art and to the childlike visions that belong to our own fabulist infancies. Like a fragment of another world, Dog operates in a concentrated, metonymic manner, a part standing in for a whole that feels strangely intimate. By recasting such atavistic visions in contemporary terms, Pondick asks us to consider the origins of culturally conceived fears and desires. Why do mythological beasts still hold a trace of their original power? Why do childhood fantasies recur in mature imaginations? In Pondick's work repressed desires and base impulses are let halfway out, with consequences as familiar as they are frightening.

R.H.



Dog, 2000
Gelber, rostfreier Stahl/*Yellow stainless steel*
81 x 71 x 42 cm
Sammlung/*Collection* Ileana Sonnabend