

NEIGHBORSHIP IN WANG JING PARK
MARTIN WEHMER SOLO EXHIBITION

Exhibition duration : 2016.09.03 (Sat) - 2016.10.16 (Sun)

Opening reception : 2016.09.03 (Sat) 3-6pm

Ying Gallery cordially invites you to attend the opening reception of "NEIGHBORSHIP IN WANG JING PARK", On 03 (Saturday) September from 3 to 6 pm.

Martin Wehmer is by almost any definition a painter—and one who embraces the traditional craft of his medium by way of extraordinary skill on the one hand, and by his concise and intellectual investigations, pursued with equally extraordinary diligence, on the other. He cannot be considered a conceptual painter per se, but his fundamental motivation is philosophical. He is by no means a relational artist (one whose pivotal undertaking is to generate work that redirects and reassesses methodology in the social placement of both the activity and the content of art), but his philosophical conviction explicates the relevance of the work of the artist in his socio-political square. His work originates from the annals of art history, specifically concerning itself with material, picture, plane, and space—issues distinctive to painting. It evolves through a tension created by the disjunction of representation and formal abstraction. Wehmer is a manufacturer of an artifice that relies on a socially relevant commodity that stays connected through his personal desire and his predisposition. His intention is not to dematerialize nor contextualize the art to advance how we define art-making today, but he consciously embraces the restrictive property of painting. The painting therefore dictates the artistic activity that has produced it and becomes a fetishistic object of desire.

Wehmer's canvases, although the imagery is wildly eclectic, they feel derived from a singular genetic pool, one for which they qualify most often beyond stylistic consistency. Their very peculiarity imbues the work with greater significance and relevance, enabling the objects to emancipate themselves and create a sense of autonomy. Ultimately, the paintings by Martin Wehmer serve as an exchange between inner intellectual convictions and emotional discharge, leaving us with a signature style outside of that very idiosyncratic construct.

In 2008, Martin Wehmer's personal as well as artistic life radically changed. With his arrival in the People's Republic of China, Wehmer's moderately provincial existence was uprooted and recontextualized in the fast-moving and rapidly morphing metropolitan city of Beijing. After his arrival in China, Wehmer focused more frequently on a didactic exercise between a previous notion of formalism and a sense of renewed convergence with figuration, more specifically with that of representation. On this trajectory, Wehmer's search for a new representation ventures through myriad symbolic imagery, a seemingly conscious effort to identify his new working environment and to make it visible in his paintings. Surely, when an artist seeks a foreign context, there is this kind of appropriation that occurs. In a representational format, that juxtaposition may translate through exotic vocabulary that emulate new visual clues or may remain self-referential. But either way, Wehmer's formerly tenuous tendencies to counter-posture formalism and representationalism have been replaced by an unmitigated approach to this dichotomy.

And more importantly, the work of an artist is not merely accomplished by exemplifying the subject matter and content as the points of reference in successful art, but the artist himself becomes the subject matter through his labor, productivity, and social relevance. Conclusively, the central discussion of Martin Wehmer's new work speaks about fetish in the art-making process, as a direct result of a commodity fetish of art's practice in a capitalist society. It utilizes as much tailored psychological fetishes inherent in a collective psyche as personal, intimate, and secretive signifiers that are thus open to interpretation.

— *Marc Hungerbühler*