

**WOLFGANG BETKE**  
*Silence Zone*

4 May - 9 June 2018  
Opening: 3 May 2018, 7 pm

With the exhibition *Silence Zone*, SETAREH GALLERY presents new works by Wolfgang Betke (\*1958) who, originally from Düsseldorf, has lived in Berlin since 1997. After graduating with a degree in Art History and Philosophy, Betke went on to study Art at the University of Fine Arts in Hamburg under Franz Erhard Walther. As well as a painter, he is also a writer and poet.

Wolfgang Betke's pictures move in a field of tension between the abstract and the figurative, between the visible and the non-visible. In his creative process Betke deliberately rejects preliminary sketches or templates. His pictorial world emerges from a lengthy and dynamic creation process, from the art of painting itself. Betke often pushes beyond conventional boundaries, sometimes resorting to ruthless means – scraping, scratching, smearing or corroding the canvas to revise, uncover or paint over previously created layers. Betke sometimes goes so far in this process of creation and destruction, construction and deconstruction, that he creates holes in the canvas, thereby breaking the limits of image's actual space. The opened up and superimposed layers of colour correspond to layers of time, through which the artist returns to the image's past and re-visits the painting process anew.

In a series of small-scale paintings, the viewer sees fragmented hints of faces in expressive colours that range from neon to pastel tones. Here we encounter Janus-faced, anthropomorphic shapes in which the viewer recognizes a subtle likeness to the artist himself.

In his large-scale work "Symeon" (2017), we encounter different zones, fragments of landscapes, echoes of vegetation, connected with stencilled figures. The title refers to the pillar saint Symeon Stylithes from the 5th century. But whenever his images seem to suggest a narrative element, this withdraws back into fragmentation, thus creating space for the before and after, and for the viewer's own interpretations and emotions.

But perhaps Betke's works are less concerned with what we as viewers are able to see, rather more with that which evades our gaze, the partially visible which our inner eye attempts to reconstruct. Time and time again, we discover eyes in Betke's images looking back at us, confronting and simultaneously involving us, bringing us to question our own certainty. Ultimately it is more our own thoughts, ideas and depths that are reflected in Betke's images.

Above all, Betke's works do not slip into illusionism. Instead, they show the conditions and processes of the medium of painting itself; the application and removal of colour on the surface, the time and duration of creation as well as a lively interplay of figuration and abstraction. Betke's paintings show what they are - a distinct bodily "language" that makes both the outer and the inner world tangible.

## WOLFGANG BETKE

(\*1958 in Dusseldorf, lives and works in Berlin, DE)

### EDUCATION

1982 - 1987 Fine Arts, Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Hamburg, with Franz Erhard Walther, DE  
1977 - 1985 University of Hamburg, Philosophy and Art History, M. A. phil., DE

### GRANTS

1989 Scholarship from the DAAD at Chelsea School of Art, London, UK  
1988 Scholarship from the Kunstfonds e.V. Bonn, DE  
1987 Scholarship from the Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg, DE

### MEDIA WORK

1998 - 2008 Weekly contribution to radio show Ocean Club Radio on Radio Eins, RBB, DE  
1994 - 1998 Co-editor of „Nummer“, magazine for art, literature and theory, Cologne, DE  
1985 - 2002 Contributions on art for radio stations NDR Hamburg and RBB, Berlin/Potsdam, DE

### SOLO SHOWS (selection)

2018 Wolfgang Betke. Schweigezone, Setareh Gallery, Dusseldorf, DE  
2016 Wolfgang Betke. So ist die Lage, Setareh Gallery, Dusseldorf, DE  
Wolfgang Betke. Zeugen des Zustands, Aurel Scheibler, Berlin, DE  
2015 Eine Verschwindung, eine Ankommenung und Irgendwas Dazwischen, Nicole Gnesa, Munich, DE  
2014 Se faire voyant, Brandenburgischer Kunstverein Potsdam e.V., DE  
2013 Wolfgang Betke: Der Glanz der stummen Sprache, Nicole Gnesa, Munich, DE  
OBERFLÄCHENTIEFGANG, Aurel Scheibler, Berlin, DE  
2012 Yet to be titled, Galerie Charlotte Moser, Geneva, CH  
... with an uncertainty verging on abstraction the state of the human now., Städtische Galerie Waldkraiburg, DE  
2011 One good painting with ten holes is better than ten bad paintings without holes, Galerie Opdahl, Stavanger, NO  
2010 I'd so like to be your ornamental hermit!, Aurel Scheibler / ScheiblerMitte, Berlin, DE  
Aurel Scheibler @ JH Architecture, London, UK  
Armory Show New York, Aurel Scheibler (solo presentation), US  
2009 fern von treibjagd und position, fließend unter den dingen, mit, Galerie Thomas Flor, Dusseldorf, DE  
2007 Non zyni Ut opium, Galerie Thomas Flor, Dusseldorf, DE  
2005 deren bart um den tisch herum wächst und wächst, dreimal, siebenmal, neunmal, Manoir de Cologny, Geneva, CH  
1998 Arbeiten am Intimbereich III, Galerie Lukas & Hoffmann, Cologne, DE  
1997 Arbeiten am Intimbereich II, with Pole aka Stefan Betke, Galerie Hammelehle & Ahrens, Stuttgart, DE  
1990 Galerie Luis Campana, Frankfurt/Main, DE  
1989 Westwerk, Hamburg, DE

# SETAREH GALLERY

## GROUP SHOWS (selection)

- 2017 Wolfgang Betke and Gregor Gleiwitz. Beyond the Fringe, Setareh Gallery, Dusseldorf, DE  
IN DEN TIEFEN DER OBERFLÄCHE, Kunstverein KISS, Kunst im Schloß Untergrönigen  
e.V., DE
- 2016 HOW TO BE UNIQUE - Sammlung Kienzle, Kienzle Art Foundation, Berlin, DE
- 2015 THERE IS NEVER A STOP AND NEVER A FINISH, Kreuzberg Pavillon, Berlin, DE  
The Black and White Key, Schaufenster, Raum für Kunst, Berlin, DE  
l'oiseau présente...be abstract, Ballhaus Ost, Berlin, DE  
l'oiseau présente...be abstract, Kunstverein Schwäbisch Hall, DE  
Flowers and other abstractions, Markhof 2, Vienna, AT
- 2014 Der Kubist Marcel Duchamp mag nicht malen, Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlin, DE  
on the same side of the water, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, DE  
SOLOS III, OZEAN, Berlin, DE  
l'oiseau présente... Der Garten der Pfade, die sich verzweigen. II, Ballhaus Ost, Berlin, DE
- 2013 Painting Forever! Keilrahmen, Kunst-Werke Berlin, DE  
Ikarier, Galerie Mikael Andersen, Berlin, DE
- 2012 Alternative Entrance, kunstbunker - forum für zeitgenössische kunst, Nuremberg, DE
- 2011 Menschenbilder- Ausgewählte Werke aus der Sammlung zeitgenössischer Kunst der  
Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Große Kunstschau Worpsswede, DE  
Der dritte Raum, Kunsthalle Dusseldorf, DE, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Warsaw, PL
- 2010 Wenn die Nacht am Tiefsten ist, ist der Tag am Nächsten, Stern Pissarro Gallery, London,  
UK
- 2009 Flugversuch mit Spurenkammer, Galerie Kienzle & Gmeiner, Berlin, DE (curators:  
Gabi and Wilhelm Schürmann)
- 2008 Art is not mute, Erste Konsthall, Gothenburg, SE
- 2004 subversiv, sexy und stilvoll, malerei heute, Stadtmuseum Jena, DE  
Mann und Frau intim, Kunsthaus Erfurt, DE
- 2002 ICI Berlin!: Maler aus Berlin in Genf, Galerie Charlotte Moser, Geneva, CH
- 1997 Arbeiten am Intimbereich I, Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, DE (curator: Nikolaus Schafhausen)
- 1992 Berlin, da fahr ich hin, Galerie Lukas & Hoffmann, Berlin, DE

## PERFORMANCES (selection)

- 2016 Die wundersamen Erlebnisse der Herren Justerini & Brook, Reading at Setareh Gallery,  
Dusseldorf, DE
- 2012 Don't disturb my circles, Performance, Städtische Galerie Waldkraiburg, DE
- 2010 Trend Mensch, Poetry Performance with Gerhard Rühm, among others, Kunstklub,  
Stuttgart, DE
- 2009 Garden Songs, music about a text by Wolfgang Betke for flute, electric guitar and drums)  
composer: Marc Sabat for Saarländischen Rundfunk's catalogue release and text;  
performance, with M.G. Schmid, Bar Kottbusser Damm 9, Berlin, DE
- 2007/09 DER ROTE SOHN UND DIE WEISSE FRAU, Galerie Kienzle & Gmeiner, Berlin, DE;  
Galerie Ben Kaufmann, Berlin; Galerie duvekleemann, Berlin, spoken piece, DE
- 2008 Institut für moderne Kunst Nuremberg, reading, UM 08, Festival of Music, Art and  
Literature, Sternhagen Gut  
Reading 500 Jahre Ocean Club, live broadcast for Radio Eins, RBB from Kantine/  
Berghain, Berlin, DE

## BIBLIOGRAPHY (selection)

Prince, Mark: Wolfgang Betke. Brandenburgischer Kunstverein Potsdam, in: frieze magazine, Issue 16, London/New York/Berlin 2014, p. 143

Scheibler, Aurel: Wolfgang Betke, in: Artforum International Magazine, November Issue, New York 2013, p. 303

Nedo, Kito/Keiper, Elke: Wolfgang Betke, with an uncertainty verging on abstraction the state of the human now", ed. by Elke Keiper, Städtische Galerie Waldkraiburg, (exhibition catalogue), Waldkraiburg 2012

Betke, Wolfgang: Versuchsanordnungen und Flugversuche jeglicher Art, Galerie Thomas Flor, (exhibition catalogue), Dusseldorf 2009

Pech, Martin: Wolfgang Betke, translated by Michael Robinson, in: frieze magazine, Issue 34, London/New York/Berlin 1997

Öffentlich oder privat? Gregor Schwerin über Wolfgang Betke in der Galerie Lukas & Hoffmann in Cologne, in: Texte zur Kunst, issue 26, Berlin 1997, p. 176

Vogel, Sabine B.: Wolfgang Bethke, in: Artforum International Magazine, September Issue, New York 1990

DAAD- Scholarship holders in London 1988/89: Thomas Bernstein, Wolfgang Betke, Markus Eisenmann, (et al.), Goethe-Institute London and The German Academic Exchange in London, (exhibition catalogue), London 1989

Behm, Harald (et al.): 8. Hamburger Arbeitsstipendium für bildende Kunst 1988: Jürgen Albrecht, Wolfgang Betke, Holger Benthien, Jaakov Blumas, Heiner Blumenthal, Andreas Coerper, Martin Conrad, Martina Ebel, Joachim Flinzer, Infant Zoyt, Kunsthalle Hamburg, (exhibition catalogue), Hamburg 1989

Wolfgang Betke, ed. by XPO Galerie, (exhibition catalogue), Hamburg 1988