

FABIAN & CLAUDE WALTER GALERIE

ARNOLD HELBLING

Moving Fast | “Words without thought never to heaven go”

Opening: 15 March 2018, 6 – 8pm Duration of the exhibition: March 16 – April 28, 2018

Fabian and Claude Walter Galerie presents works by the New York-based Swiss artist Arnold Helbling under the title *Moving Fast* for the seventh time. The powerful new paintings are a direct development of the artist's work, which was exhibited in our gallery in his last exhibition *Treeline* from 2015.

“Arnold Helbling is using architecture's explicit, insistent actuality as his formal and conceptual framework. His obsession with structure, civic architecture, and their aesthetics, psychology and ideologies merges the architectonics of nature with that of the man-made.”

The imagery of the paintings continues to be dominated by construction lines drawn dynamically and precisely across the canvases. In the work 'Gainville' for instance a rocket-like steel construction for cellular antennas seems to be flying into the night sky. In 'Port House' the diagonal sash bars in the windows of a glass building designed by Zaha Hadid morph into a crystal, which appears to tumble down on a roof of an old harbor building like a meteor.

Recently Arnold Helbling has begun embedding words in some of these painted lines. Linguistic information invades the pictorial environment, enhancing the work with a discursive dimension. In art history, correspondences can be found in the lettered ribbons of the gothic period, in constructivism's painted words or in the mundane slogans of graphic works with a political or commercial purpose, or in graffiti street art.

'The Wind Crosses the Land' is a painting on a canvas covered by broad lines. It represents the heart of an installation that takes up the gallery's lower floor in its entirety. Drenched in strong colors, this monumental painting is flanked by transparent acrylic skins of a reduced colorfulness, which extend all the way from floor to ceiling. The skins reference the artist's technique: Helbling typically paints his imagery first on a plastic sheet and only then transfers it onto canvas.

This installation allows for a direct experience of the art. Visitors are completely immersed in it. They are free to look at the skins, which are suspended from the ceiling, from the front and from the rear. A viewer can take up the viewpoint of the canvas and then look through the transparent paint at the world in front of the picture. Then again, he or she can assume the traditional position of a viewer facing the canvas and look at the color residing on it from the front. The membranes allow for an open visual quest; viewers are invited to a multiplicity of experiences. They can move, choose perspectives and experiment with proximity and distance. The color literally hangs in the air, it hovers, it is fragile and infirm - it is its own image carrier.

The exhibition's title *Moving Fast* references the high-speed development in today's world, where new technologies engender stressful and homogenizing life experiences of a dystopian character. The lines quoted in the paintings are from T. S. Eliot's poem "The Waste Land," written after the First World War. They confront the breathless progress with an inner voice of yearning, with lost illusions and personal memories.

But *Moving Fast* is also descriptive of the artist's intuitive practice, which he continually refines. Helbling is a persistent explorer of his real and virtual environment, trying to find relevant insights, which he then transforms, into expressive and striking paintings.

For over 30 years Helbling has exhibited widely in the United States, Europe, and Asia. His work has been shown in New York City at The Deutsche Haus NYU, White Columns, Roebing Hall, the Swiss Institute, and Artist Space, among others. He has also exhibited work at the Sungkok Art Museum, Seoul, Korea; the Aargauer Kunsthhaus, Aarau, Switzerland; the Helmhaus, Zurich, Switzerland; and the Kunstmuseum Zug, Switzerland; Von Lintel Gallery, NY; Diane Rosenstein Gallery, Los Angeles, among others. His work is in public collections including the Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, Bern; Stadt Zurich, Switzerland; Aargauisches Kunsthhaus, Aarau, Switzerland; Collection of the New School University, New York; Centre Pasqu'Art, Biel, Switzerland; and the Neuberger Museum of Art, State University of New York, Purchase, NY.; Museum of University of New England, Portland, Main.

His work has been reviewed in *Art in America*, *Kunst-Bulletin*, *The New York Times*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *Basler Zeitung*, *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung*, and *The Korean Times*, among others. He was the recipient of the Swiss National Grant in 1990 and 1992.

We look forward to welcoming you at the opening and are at your disposal for further information and pictures.

Sincerely,
Claude & Fabian Walter