
**KUNST
HISTORISCHES
MUSEUM
WIEN**



OCTOBER 15, 2019 TO
JANUARY 19, 2020

KLAUS MOSETTIG – THE DAVID PLATES

Together with the special exhibition *Caravaggio & Bernini*, the Kunsthistorisches Museum is showing a new series of works by the Austrian artist Klaus Mosettig in the Bassano Hall. His series *The David Plates* is based on X-rays of Caravaggio's painting *David with the Head of Goliath* from the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum. The fifteen large-scale drawings were created by artist Klaus Mosettig in his Vienna studio over a period of almost two years, from the autumn of 2017 through to the summer of 2019. This juxtaposition of two related exhibitions – one showcasing Old Masters, the other a contemporary artist – is something of a premiere for the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

Mosettig is a leading contemporary artist who specializes in the medium of drawing. His work has been critically acclaimed and shown both in Austria and abroad, incl. at the Secession and the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig in Vienna, at the Saatchi Gallery in London, at the Kunsthallen in Karlsruhe, in Nuremberg and most recently in Darmstadt.

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Klaus Mosettig submits the X-rays to a multi-step medial transformation: the original images become slides, which the artist then projects onto a sheet of paper on the wall in his studio in Vienna, turning this enlarged painting comprising nothing but pure exposure value into a one-to-one template for a painstakingly-produced, highly-disciplined autograph drawing. The process experiences yet another level through Mosettig's drawing technique: employing a highly-repetitive movement, the artist translates the projection into linear hatching that slowly, from left to right, covers the entire sheet with circa five-centimetres-wide vertical strips. He never varies the pressure on his pencil; up to ten different grades allow him to create a full range of tones that reflect the various brightness gradients of the projected image.

The X-rays were taken in 2010 as part of the technological examination of the painting, and they comprise fifteen individual images, each measuring 30 × 40 centimetres, that together cover the entire picture executed on poplar wood (90.5 × 116.5 cm). The findings are particularly interesting because a second, older composition was discovered beneath the painting we see today: a mythological scene featuring Venus, Mars and Cupid by an anonymous Mannerist. Caravaggio reused the panel, covering it completely with a layer of paint and turning it by 90 degree before executing his own composition. In addition to easily recognizable large forms, the character of the X-rays is defined by a wealth of small traces and marks caused by the texture of the material, aging processes and later interventions or treatments suffered by the panel such as, for example, the closing and filling-in of damage caused by woodworms during a restoration carried out in the middle of the twentieth century.

In a contemplative labour of love, Klaus Mosettig turns this into a fascinating and hard to grasp visual experience with effects that change depending on from where we view his work. From a distance, we can make out some details on some of the drawings, here an eye, there a head, David's shoulder and chest, while others appear as formless black-and-white abstractions. The original X-rays record Caravaggio's painting in three horizontal rows of five images each. The hanging of *The David Plates* follows this systematics but arranges all fifteen works in a continuous line. Formal peculiarities like dark edges or relatively large overlaps are

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a functional part of the original images and encourage the imaginary reconstruction of the complete painting.

But Mosettig's works also demand to be viewed up close. Here, the viewer jumps into another dimension, the drawings' basic visual elements, a shimmering mosaic of hatched patches in delicately graded shades of grey, becomes apparent. A highly-aesthetic image of resolution but also proof of dogged manual work, like a Mosettig signature. On this level disparate things converge that had already become part of Mosettig's art, among them Jackson Pollock's drip paintings (2009–2012) or the geometric-planar art of Josef Albers (*Withdrawal*, 2012–2015), but also his daughter's doodles (*Informel*, 2014–2017), close-up views of the surface of the moon (*Apollo 11*, 2008) and a battered table top on which refugees were fingerprinted upon arrival in Greece (*Handwriting*, 2018)

The artist works with paradoxes. There are no lines, no contours, no hierarchies in his drawings. Hatching, which normally suggests depth and three-dimensionality, stoically reads and feels a flat surface. The artist becomes an automaton, a scanner, but the transposition is "interrupted", takes on a life of its own. The process of drawing celebrates indifference – but the result is anything but emotionless, it should instead be read as a document of the artist abandoning himself to random structures – free from design but formulated in a medium that traditionally stands for design, for the sovereign creation of worlds with a controlled line. Categories are jumbled together, proximity and distance, motif and image, original and copy, the unique, un-repeatable as a reproduction, a series, a work programme. Using a maximum of control, Mosettig's shows us what we cannot control.

BIOGRAPHY

KLAUS MOSETTIG

Klaus Mosettig, born 1975 in Graz, studied sculpture under Bruno Gironcoli at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. From the beginning, he took an interest in the expanded notion of sculpture with an emphasis on the temporal dimension, as seen in his early works with 16 mm film. He subsequently came up with forms that focus on the process aspect of sculpture or the plastic arts. In 2006, he exhibited the installation *Processual Minimalism*, a "collaboration" with an ant colony temporarily confined to acrylic glass boxes. Mosettig's first institutional solo exhibition took place

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that same year at the Neue Galerie in Graz, Styria. At the centre of the exhibition *Holzplastik* were apple trees as living artworks that are “cultivated” for an extended period of time through grafting and refinement, inspired by the social-utopian concepts of Charles Fourier (1772–1837). Mosettig’s system unfolds in full form here as a style of working between polarities like chance and control, nature and art, process and work, with a conceptual stringency whilst also retaining a strong sensual and physical, not to say artisanal, component.

The apple trees of the Graz exhibition were accompanied by drawings that meticulously recorded the artistic interventions in the growth process. The medium of drawing has, in different manifestations, been of great importance for Mosettig’s art. Ever since his 2009 exhibition *Pradolux* at the Vienna Secession, it has been in the centre of his work and its public perception. The signature of Mosettig’s drawing practice is a process that he applies in the same manner to each different subject, and that is characterized by two constants: a slide projection that is the actual subject of the drawing, and the systematic translation of the projected image into pencil-hatched grey tones. The artist regularly works in series and also relies on artistic devices like repetition and mirroring.

The subjects that he chooses cover a wide field, ranging from prominent works of art (by Jackson Pollock, Josef Albers and Käthe Kollwitz, among others) to settlements of dirt and dust (*Projector Portraits*, 2008/09), scrawled drawings of his own daughter (*Informel*, 2014–2017) and photos of the surface of the moon (*Apollo 11*, 2008/09), and to a table top from Greece on which incoming refugees had their fingerprints taken (*Handwriting*, 2017/18). Diverse in subject matter and carrying different emotional charges, all of these finds become visual facts in their own equal right, material for Mosettig’s contemplative-manual translation labour. However consistent in approach, each of these work series unfolds different horizons and reflections on medium and material, painting and drawing, invention and appropriation, original and copy, image and reality, instant and duration, closeness and distance.

Mosettig’s works have been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions at institutions including Kunsthalle Darmstadt, Kunsthalle Krems, Belvedere 21, Vienna, Saatchi Gallery, London, Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Kunsthalle Nuremberg,

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Stadtgalerie Schwaz, Kunstraum Dornbirn, mumok, Vienna, Vienna Secession, Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbruck, and Neue Galerie, Graz. He has received numerous awards, grants and scholarships, among them the Art Prize of the City of Graz, the Professor Hilde Goldschmidt Prize, and the Promotion Award of the City of Vienna. The artist lives and works in Vienna.

For more information on Klaus Mosettig please visit:

<http://www.klausmosettig.mur.at/>

Texts about Klaus Mosettig:

<http://www.klausmosettig.mur.at/text.html>

PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS

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The David Plates, 1
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EXHIBITION
PROGRAMME

ARTIST TALK

Thu, Nov. 7, 2019, 7pm

Klaus Mosettig

In conversation with Joao Ribas and Jasper Sharp (in English)

Place: Cupola Hall

Please register at talks@khm.at

The tour is free with your valid museum ticket.

CURATOR'S TOURS

Wed, Nov. 6, 2019 / Wed, Jan. 16, 2020

Each time at 4pm

Guided tours with curator Jasper Sharp (in English)

Please register at kunstvermittlung@khm.at

The tour is free with your valid museum ticket.

ARTIST TOUR

Thu, Dec. 12, 2019, 6.30pm

Caravaggio Resonanzen

The David Plates by Klaus Mosettig

A dialogue tour with Rolf Wienkötter and the artist

Duration: approx. 1.5 hours

No registration necessary

The tour is free with your valid museum ticket.

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OPENING HOURS AND ENTRANCE FEES

Kunsthistorisches Museum	Adults	€ 16,-
Maria-Theresien-Platz	Concessions	€ 12,-
1010 Vienna	Vienna City Card	€ 15,-
	Groups (of 10 or over)	€ 12,-
	Annual Ticket	€ 44,-
Tue–Sun, 10am – 6pm	Annual Ticket under 25	€ 25,-
Thu till 9pm	Children and teens under 19	frei

Online tickets are available at <https://shop.khm.at/de/tickets/>

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