

PRESS RELEASE**Uwe Wittwer*****Erlking – Mirror***

6 May to 3 June 2017

Opening reception: Saturday, 6 May 2017, 2pm to 6pm

Uwe Wittwer (*1954, lives and works in Zurich) has become prominent with many solo exhibitions in Switzerland and abroad. For his third solo exhibition at Lullin + Ferrari he unfolds the many layers of his extensive oeuvre.

The title of the exhibition *Erlking – Mirror* directs the interpretation into a certain area of thought: Erlking alludes to the ballad of the same name by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe from 1782 and to romantic songs by Schubert. The dash before the word “Mirror” expresses the idea to pause for a moment and of a concentrated reflection. Uwe Wittwer develops in his exhibitions with stupendous certitude associative connections and subject matters. By doing this he always keeps the overall impression of the single images in mind. The exhibition is a tour de force in choreographic and dramaturgical matters, merging the different subjects to a coherent and elegant exhibition.

The black-and-white triptych *Robert* starts the exhibition. It shows a nocturnal interior and represents a scene from the movie *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* by Sydney Pollack from 1969. The story line of the film circles around a murderous dancing contest, in which the main actress Gloria Beatty (played by Jane Fonda) desires to be shot to death because of exhaustion. In the right panel stands Robert Syverton (played Michael Sarrazin) during a short break in the dance marathon. He will relieve his dance partner Gloria Beatty by shooting her. In the left panel Wittwer depicted, in anticipation of the things to come, a bullet hole. To the left of the atmospheric interior hangs the diptych *Gloria*, showing on one side the actress Jane Fonda in a smoking break during the dancing contest and on the other side the beginning of the novel by Horace McCoy, on which the film is based. Robert Syverton speaks this passage in the dramatic finale of the movie. Particularly remarkable in the dramaturgy of the first room is the doubling of the window room suggested by the painted bullet hole. The crossing of the threshold of the entrance door is both entrance into the gallery but also entrance to the space of thought of the exhibition. One of the main subjects of the exhibition the depiction of horses is in the first room only implied in the title of the movie *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*

The large painting *Carriage with Tarpaulin* leads into the main room. Survivors in Frankfurt on the Main of the Second World War crowd on the carriage. Virtuously Wittwer translated with painterly means a small black-and-white photography into a large canvas painting. The faces of the people on the carriage are not distinguishable, but through their posture one can adumbrate their characteristics. The group of people on the carriage represents a diversity of people dragged by two stoic horses. Photographs of survivors on carriages are quite common. It seems that the depiction of this kind of scenes was a nearly compulsive behaviour to capture the moment of survival.

Left to the *Carriage with Tarpaulin* extends in oversize a record on a light green ground. The painting represents the legendary record “*Horses*” by Patti Smith, released 10 November 1975. (Not as wrongly noted in Wikipedia 13 December 1975, we thank Veit Stauffer for his profound research). The grooves of the record are especially highlighted and reveal a nostalgia for vinyl and the mid 1970s. The round form alludes to target paintings by Jasper Johns – a subtle hint to pop art.

Right to the *Carriage with Tarpaulin* regroup a portrait of a woman on canvas and two watercolours with mirrored horse depictions and the character *Oh Anmer* to a triad. The woman is Emily Davison, a famous suffragette, who walked out of protest during the decisive moment of the Epsom Derby 1913 into the group of galloping horses. The legend tells, that she wanted to tie a sash around the neck of the kingly horse Anmer and therefore confronted the horse. She didn't survive the impact and became the most well-known activist of women's rights and a martyr. The story is enigmatic – was Emily Davison seeking to die? „What Wittwer attracted to this story, is the fact, that there is no clarity about the incident.” Philipp Meier notes in an excellent essay about Uwe Wittwer in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. (NZZ, Saturday 11 March 2017, p. 50).

Opposite of Emily Davison and the mirrored horse Anmer hangs a great series of nine variations of the painting *The Hay Wain* (1820-21, National Gallery, London) by John Constable. In these watercolours Wittwer reveals his mastery in the medium Constable hold in high esteem. In these works Wittwer's affinity for romantic English art is tangible. Wittwer focuses on details, enlarges parts of the painting, crossfades and adds amongst other things texts from private letters. This series of watercolours is comparable to a musical suite, in which new layers become audible, respectively visible.

On the same wall as the series of watercolours hangs the equestrian painting *Erlking after Baldung Grien*. Wittwer transferred the romantic figure of the Erlking into the Renaissance by following the composition of the painting *Knight, Girl and Death* by Hans Baldung Grien, today in the Louvre in Paris. The motive of the saving rider returns in the back room of the gallery in doubled form. In *Erlking – Mirror* Wittwer unifies two variations of the subject from two different dates of origin. The watercolour on the left emerged 1995 in Paris, the one on the right 2017 in Zurich: Here the reflection on a subject matter over the period of more than 20 years is striking. On the left wall in the back room a tapestry has been drawn directly with pencil on the wall. The recurrent pattern shows a scene of a rest during a foxhunt. The original for the model is a large painting by John Ferneley from 1846, today in the Yale Center for British Art, in New Haven. On this elaborated wallpaper Wittwer hung small paintings all depicting horses in different forms. There is a negatively rendered rocking horse, a hanging, mirrored horse, packhorse in the war and a lonesome horse in a ruin landscape. Two paintings of small horse sculptures from ceramics complete the ensemble. These figurines are a symbol of bourgeoisie and have been made of Allach porcelain. And here a macabre level of tranquillity establishes itself as nobody else than Himmler had built the Allach-porcelain-manufacture in the concentration camp Dachau, in which prisoners had to execute compulsory labour. No wonder the figurines partially depicted Nazi soldiers and their horses. Opposite of this group hangs a large watercolour rendering geometrically distributed, sought after equestrian figurines from the Nymphenburger porcelain manufacture.

Of course Wittwer is not a painter of horses, but horses are for him a multifaceted reason to paint. He mentions an important book by Ulrich Raulff, *Farewell to the Horse: The Final Century of Our Relationship*, published 2015, which fascinates him. There were some famous painter of horses, George Stubbs and Théodore Géricault for example, who carved out the human side of the horses.

In the exhibition Wittwer revolves around different subjects and tightens several strands of associations. He unfolds a panorama of impressions and references, which the public re-enacts in the absorbed contemplation. In all the works references can be found to earlier group of works and it becomes apparent that Wittwer engages in the prosecution of a large and coherent oeuvre.

The opening reception takes place Saturday, 6 May 2017 from 2 to 6pm. The artist will be present. For further information and images please contact the gallery, Lullin + Ferrari, Limmatstrasse 214, CH-8005 Zurich, t. +41 43 205 2607, info@lullinferrari.com, www.lullinferrari.com
Opening hours: Tuesday to Friday, noon to 6 pm, Saturday 11 to 5 pm, and by appointment