

Visitor information

Mark Wallinger

18. September bis 11. Dezember 2022

Mark Wallinger (* 1959 in Chigwell, lives in London) is considered one of the most important present-day British artists. He is an artist who, in the 1990s, caused a sensation with his socially engaged artworks. At its core, however, his artistic attitude is characterized by a deeply humanistic sense of responsibility. In 2001, he represented Great Britain at the Venice Biennale, and in 2007 he received the Turner Prize, one of the world's most important prizes for contemporary art.

The Museum Langmatt is exhibiting Mark Wallinger's paintings for the first time inside Switzerland, offering a representative insight into his artwork from recent years, whose circumstances has included the coronavirus pandemic. Although Wallinger became internationally famous for installation, sculpture and performance and video artwork, painting is a thread running through his whole oeuvre. It was present in his first beginnings as an artist in the 1980s, and, as of 2007 onwards, once more plays a central role in his work. During the last few years in particular, his engagement with the medium and his fresh questioning of it has greatly intensified. This is a good time to present the most recent work of this versatile artist.

Extending across two storeys, this exhibition will feature a display of large-format *Action Paintings*, and the new, polychrome *Proteus Paintings* in smaller formats. The artist painted – or formed – both series of artworks with his bare hands, giving them an intense connection to his body. They appear at once conceptual and sensual. The touches of the fingers and the things that the artist's eyes see come together, at the same time, to form a multisensory creation process that remains readable in the picture and can thus be traced. At the same time, Wallinger's working method is reminiscent of experiences from early childhood: finger painting and clay modelling in the kindergarten. This is an experience familiar to almost everyone.

In his large-format *Action Paintings*, Mark Wallinger immerses his hands, his fingers in silvery paint. With

expansive arm movements, he draws them over the canvas, leaving bright traces over the black background. The unfathomable black of the *Action Paintings* is combined with an almost reverential silence. Looking at it for a short time is enough to make us forget the fast pace of the everyday as we are immersed in a mysterious mycelium of shimmering lines. The dancing traces of the fingers form an energetic composition of seeing and hearing.

The *Proteus Paintings* are made out of plasticine, a semi-soft, malleable substance. The artist must first divide the material into small pieces and knead and mould it, in order to orchestrate it as colours. Wallinger thus finds himself confronted with a double resistance: material and ground. This sounds simple, but it is complicated to the extent that the working processes have greater similarities with a plastic, sculptural artwork than with the fluid character of painting. Just as with the *Action Paintings* – but in a much smaller format – dancing sequences of movement take us to a magical world beyond this one, into a microcosm that initially seems as though it can be taken in at a glance, but which in fact, the more we look, opens a whole universe up to us. This seeing experience marks a striking difference from Abstract Expressionism, which intentionally used the large format in order to overpower viewers and to break down barriers to that seeing experience. Wallinger, on the other hand, shows that existentially moving encounters with one's own self are not a question of format. On the contrary, in a time of great uncertainty and global upheavals, intimate dialogue with the artwork has a heightened importance.

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication by Hatje Cantz Verlag Berlin with texts by Mark Hudson and Markus Stegmann. Hardcover, German/English, 128 pages, 85 illustrations, CHF 38 / CHF 25.

LANGMATT

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