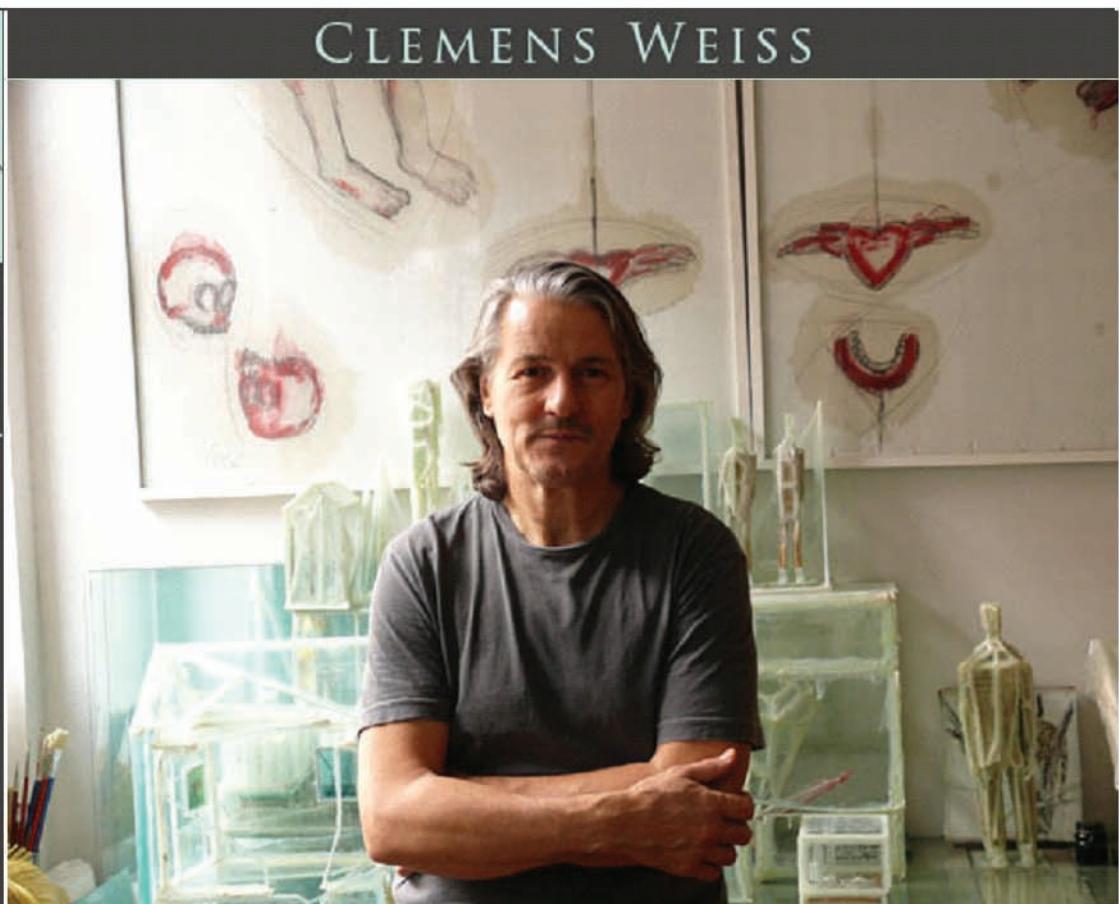
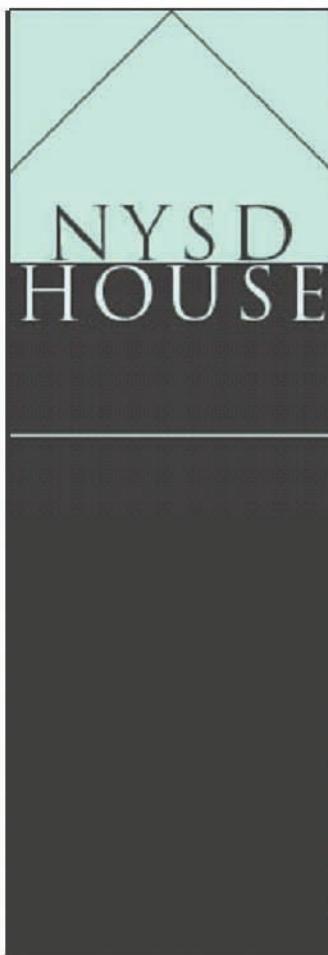


Clemens Weiss



Clemens Weiss in his studio/apartment.

'I'm in the business of sorting things out, fine tuning and finding a visual language for it,' says German artist, **Clemens Weiss**, about his work. He makes no bones about being a theoretician, at one point leaving us bewildered with a long mathematical explanation that involved spirals, chessboards, emptying an ocean with a teaspoon and how rabbits multiply ('I don't understand anything you've just said,' said Sian flatly) ... but his art is intriguing: glass sculptures that sometimes resemble strange cities or objects made out of pieces of glass thickly daubed together with glue, as though a child had tried to mend something he or she knows is intricate and precious but nevertheless baffling. There are also collections of spiky, vital drawings often depicting human excess and appetite. Clemens trained first as a medical student and then went on to do an engineering-related degree but and says 'Scientists tell me I'm an artist and artists tell me I'm a scientist. Really I'm something in between.'

by Sian Ballen & Lesley Hauge • photographs by Jeffrey Hirsch

What is your attraction to glass as a material?

Oh that's very easy to answer. I mean glass is less 'material' than anything else. If you have a piece of wood, stainless steel, whatever, if you look close, there are individual differences [between the pieces] – with glass, for 50 years, unless you scratch marks in it with a diamond cutter, it stays the same.

Doesn't it turn yellow?

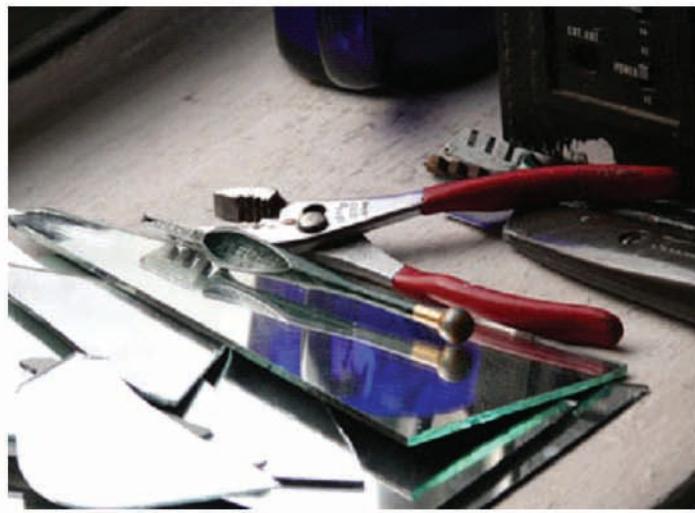
Not really. What it does, what most people don't realize, is that it slowly loses its shape. It's still in a liquid state. I've become something of an expert on glass. It's not crystalline. It's just physics. It seems I have used tons and tons of it, so it seems like I have a fetish or affinity for glass but I am more of a philosopher so I needed this 'less of a material' ... and glass, since it is transparent, since it has no [individuality] attached to it, well, that's all ...



What would you like people to think, to bring away from your art? Your work thwarts the viewer as much as inviting them in, doesn't it?

Well, it's the atmosphere. [Sometimes] you can see what an artist wants and you get it right away but with me it's the opposite, they will say 'well, he's not cynical, he's not this, he's not that' and then I end up being a 'conceptual artist'.











So you have a conception of yourself as an artist – well, what is that?

The thing is my tax returns says 'artist' or 'visual artist' and some will say I'm a sculptor because I make objects but artists are not too big on [labels] ... I'm somewhere in between. I have a background more in science. I have a technical degree where I learned to work as precise as two-thousandths part of a millimeter and I was very good at it. But you asked earlier about why the glass is pieced together in this messy way, and this is the opposite. Artists sometimes don't know what they're doing and they're proud of it, they say 'you know, I have an intuition' ... but the thing is that in my objects, they are logical, there are sequences, even in these kinds of things that [may not look] precise, they are precise ... but if you want to make a balanced statement you have to balance [the precision] with something ... and it works better with the most opposite [i.e. messy] way of putting it together.

This is a cliché, the precise German.

Well, I wish they were precise.

People do have this perception of Germans. Why?

There is in a way a reason for it and that has to do with the language. The German language, seen from the outside, you know the way you see it in movies, this barking, military sound, that's ridiculous, but if you look at history, there's a reason why they're good at engineering and philosophical engineering, because the language gives you more options, it's logical ... it's better suited. If you want to make something sound nice, well sing it in Italian or French or something else! ... But if you read French philosophy, it's full of logical glitches.







Do you have a fear of disorder?

The way I explain it, there are certain problems and they are mounting up and it becomes more costly not to know what's going on.

But you can't always control situations by imposing order.

It's not controlling – then you overdo it. The difference is, well, it's just the old-fashioned things of a little bit of foresight and thinking things through.





And do you think this is something that, if we did more of it, we would be happier?

The culture, like so many things, depends on how many people participate. It's organization. Always what's missing is the most important thing.

So that's an image of human beings working like ants in an anthill. Is that your image?

No! It's just the opposite. I stepped out of that right away.

What if you can't come up with a solution to something?

That's no problem. It's only a problem if you expect otherwise.









So in this period of time working as an artist, where are you in your thoughts now ?

I walked out of school at 17 and I've been working as an artist ever since. I spent about ten years laying the groundwork, putting down the theoretical work. I started showing in New York. I wanted to be as clear as possible, to not make mistakes with my thinking, no misunderstandings. I always started with the most complex things in the beginning, not the simple things. The thing is [for many] it's always that somebody puts out big ideas and they're full of illusions, if you want to get somebody to do something, especially a big project, you have to include a very high degree of illusion, the pyramids, the moon program, it's basically very simple ...

But that's vision...

Yeah, but if you want to communicate it, you'd better simple. It just doesn't convince me.

What has being an artist taught you about how to live?

Well ... I mean, I've always known that I'm not good at fitting in. I hate to get up early in the morning and be somewhere ... I needed something where I step out after noon — and I haven't missed anything.

by Sian Ballen & Lesley Hauge • photographs by Jeffrey Hirsch





The scene from Clemens' latest exhibition, *playful objects + sculptures*, which opened on February 3rd, 2009, in Gelsenkirchen, Germany ...



Clemens Weiss: Untitled, from the "120 Days of Sodom" series, 2006, pigments and ink on paper, 23 by 35 inches; at Ronald Feldman. (Review on p. 127.)

Clemens Weiss at Ronald Feldman

Several years have passed since the German-born, New York-based Clemens Weiss last besieged these galleries, filling walls and pedestals with a narrative of his own devising. A series of drawings with inscribed fragments of preexisting text, as well as abstracted figures and glass pedestals, were repeated here. As in his previous show, Weiss deployed the drawings around the gallery in an orderly fashion.

In the first room, some 25 large-scale pigment-and-ink-on-paper drawings, each 23 by 35 inches and fixed directly to the wall, were mounted as a visually compelling sequence, an illustrated manuscript based on Sade's *120 Days of Sodom*. The drawings, all dated 2006, teem with demons, monsters and skulls, described in the artist's fluid hand as dinner guests "vile" and "foul." Following several drawings in the sequence without text, Weiss returns to his Sadean source and picks out examples of provocative or odd observations such as "there are above four or five thousand women in Paris who belong to one another" and "that dreadful colossus did indeed make me think of Hercules or a centaur . . ." Implications are obscure. Weiss mounted five related sculptures

on his rudely structured glass pedestals. *Stele with Ceramic Satyr and 3 Sketchbooks* (2005), a 13-by-12-inch vitrine placed on a 5-foot pedestal, offers a figure wearing a beaked carnival mask seated, knees drawn to its chest, on three real notebooks.

In the north gallery, Weiss conceived a similar installation of drawings, sculptures made of industrial glass, sketches and plans for theater performances gathered together under the title "Studies for *The Complaint of Art* theater performance." At 24 by 22 inches on a 41-inch glass pedestal, *Sculpture Study for Theater Set* (1998) incorporates what appears to be a game board, the back and sides populated with single files of figures made of industrial glass and joined with glue. There was also a vitrine for the viewing of *Sketchbook for Theater Performance* (2000), a display of photographs of a rehearsal that likewise suggests a board game in its placement of participants. Weiss dedicated another vitrine to *The Complaint of Art* (1990), displaying volumes open to pages of poems by Konrad von Würzburg written in 1250—an allegorical defense of the uses of poetry. Each volume contains unique drawings by Weiss and the poet's suitably arcane locutions.

—Edward Leffingwell

"Clemens Weiss." *The New Yorker*, August 4, 2003, p. 13.

CLEMENS WEISS

If prophets doodled on their morning papers, it might look like these drawings. Angels, erupting volcanoes, alligators, and comets swirl through miasmas of hot orange and red, sometimes affixed directly to newspaper, sometimes simply nodding to newspapers as a source (some works include words such as "possibly" and "enjoy" in *Times* typeface). The works are framed in heavy glass crisscrossed with seams of glue; there are also crystallographic glass-and-glue steles and shelving units. A Blakean grandeur is implied, but on the whole, as one partially obscured headline puts it, the work is about "big visions unfulfilled." Through Aug. 1. (Ronald Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 212-226-3232.)

HERBST SALON

Katharina Grosse

Claudia Hart

Hans Georg Inhestern

Klaus Killisch

Gabriele Langendorf

Yvonne Mühleis

Martin Noël

Werner Reiterer

Angelika Schirmer

Frances Scholz

Jan Schüler

Clemens Weiss

Warum, um alles in der Welt, in ART ein Herbstsalon? Die Redaktion hatte sich vorgenommen, mit Werken von zwölf interessanten Künstlern erstmals eine Art Ausstellung im Heft zu inszenieren, und zu einer Austellung gehört nun mal ein griffiger Titel. Ganz im Ernst: Die Vorstellung neuer Künstler auf dem Sprung zum Ruhm zählt zu den schönsten Privilegien eines Magazins, das der zeitgenössischen Kunst verpflichtet ist. Schon im Juli 1980 hat ART damit begonnen, diese Informationspflicht regelmäßig wahrzunehmen. Damals unter dem angreifbaren, weil kaum dauerhaft einzulösenden, Rubrum *Entdeckt*. Später nannten wir diese Sparte bescheidener *Junge Kunst*, was irgendwie auch kein Volltreffer war.

Aber Salon, dieser überlebte Begriff, ließe sich fragen, der soll's nun bringen? Weiß die Redaktion nicht, wo er herkommt und wie belastet er ist?

Der erste Pariser Salon fand 1667 statt, und im Lauf der Jahrhunderte wurde die ursprünglich nützliche Werkschau zur sterilen Mammutveranstaltung mit dem Zweck einer Abschottung akademischer Malerei gegen jegliche Neuerung. Die sehgestörten Salon-Juroren, meist Professoren der staatlichen Kunstakademie, galten als intrigant, etliche waren zudem korrupt. Im Jahr 1866, als der Pariser Schriftsteller Emile Zola sich den Salon erstmals kritisch vornahm, stanken die Verhältnisse zum Himmel.

„Da freie Kunstaußerungen unvorhergesehenes und nicht wiedergutzumachendes Unheil anrichten können“, schrieb Zola ironisch, „wird am Eingang zum Allerheiligsten eine Wache aufgestellt, eine Art Zoll für das Ideal, der beauftragt ist, die Pakete zu prüfen und jegliche betrügerische Ware abzuweisen, die versuchen sollte, sich in den Tempel einzuschmuggeln.“

Da waren wir besser. Nirgendwo eine Wache, nirgendwo Schmuggel-Versuche, auch kein Tempel in Sicht. „Allerheiligst“ nur der Auftrag an Redaktionsmitglieder und Korrespondenten, sich nach „freien Kunstaußerungen“ umzusehen, die eintreffenden Kataloge zu sichten, Einladungen zu Ausstellungen wahrzunehmen, die Förderkojen des Kölner Kunstmarkts zu prüfen, mit Konfidenten zu diskutieren. Und dann alles in Hamburg auf den Tisch.

Monate sind darüber hingegangen. Aus einem Feld von anfangs mehr als 80 Vorschlägen (von denen die Künstler nichts wußten) wurden erst 60, dann 40, dann 24 und schließlich zwölf. Von vornherein stand das Tutorenprinzip fest: Wer seine Kandidatin oder seinen Kandidaten durchgesetzt hat, nimmt auch Kontakt auf und kommentiert den Beitrag in ART.

Um den Namen als Gefäß der ganzen Geschichte ging es erst zuletzt. Und dabei siegte der Titel „Herbstsalon“ mit guten Argumenten. Denn auch in Paris gab's ja Unterschiede. Ein Maler namens Jules Holzapffel, refüsiert beim von Zola beschriebenen Salon 1866, brachte sich aus Kummer über diese Ablehnung um, wodurch der Salon bis heute diskreditiert ist. Aber bei der Konkurrenz, im kleineren, feineren und liberalen Herbstsalon, feierte der Avantgardist Marcel Duchamp 1908 seinen ersten Auftritt als Maler.

Zwölf Künstler lassen noch viel erwarten

Westdeutsche Zeitung WZ
vom 01.06.

Viele Gedanken für die ungehaltene Rede

Installation von Weiss bei „Buchstäblich“

Im Katalog zum Ausstellungsprojekt „Buchstäblich“ steht Clemens Weiss an alphabetisch letzter Stelle, doch wollte man das jeweils Gezeigte nach Menge und Genauigkeit der Gedanken und gedanklichen Schritte bemessen, ginge er gewiß als einer der ersten durchs Ziel.

1955 in Düsseldorf geboren, lebt Weiss seit 1987 in New York und Mönchengladbach. An die Öffentlichkeit trat er erst vor drei Jahren, zunächst in den USA und schon dort mit erstaunlichem Erfolg — erstaunlich für einen Künstler, der sich überwiegend mit Mathematik, Medizin, Philosophie, Natur- und Geistesgeschichte befaßt und auch jetzt, im „Kunstraum“, an das logische Denken des Betrachters appelliert.

Dort steht, was in Form von drei, jeweils in Jahren angewachsenen „Installationssegmenten“ auf ein Weiterwachsen, ein Weiterdenken angelegt ist: in Regalen gestapeltes Arbeitsmaterial aus handschriftlichen Notizen und Büchern (über Michelangelo, El Greco, Goya), aus „div. Objekten“ (Steine, Fossilien, Mullbinden, eine Schere, ein Handschuh...), aus angesammelten Gedanken über die Zeit, die Kunst und die „Verhältnisse unseres Denkens“.

Weiss hat es in Glasbehältern verklebt und versiegelt und damit dem Zugriff entzogene. Und wenn das Glas noch stellenweise Einblick gewährt — ein Eindringen erlaubt es nicht.

Einer Laborsituation, einer Versuchsanordnung gleich, er-

innert das Gezeigte auf den ersten Blick an die Arbeit der Spurensucher, der Feldforscher in der Kunst. Anders als diese aber breitet Weiss kein fiktives Material aus, und seine Anordnung entspricht den realen Anforderungen ökonomischen Arbeitens. Was sich da stapelt, ist in der Tat das Konzept einer Rede, bei der es freilich kaum darum geht, sie eines Tages auch zu halten: wie sollte einer auch ans Ende kommen, der wie Clemens Weiss „lieber unter tausend Möglichkeiten unterscheidet als unter zweien“, der Worten, Begriffen und einer überkommenen Logik zu sehr mißtraut, um sie nicht ständig neu zu überprüfen, in feinster Regulierung neu auszurichten.

Weiss vergleicht sein Tun denn auch mit der Arbeit eines Eichmeisters: er justiere etwas, er rücke etwas zurecht.

Zu wissen, daß er dies mit aller Genauigkeit tut, daß er über jeden seiner gedanklichen Schritte Auskunft gibt, und am Ende doch nichts nachlesen, nachweisen zu können — das reizt und enttäuscht zugleich (bis 23 Juni, Friedrich Ebert Straße 191. Geöffnet Di bis Fr 16 bis 19, Sa und So 10 bis 13 Uhr).

Christiane Müller

New York Times
Art Reviews by Roberta Smith
Friday September 16, 1988
Vol.CXXXVII, No. 47,630
p.C29

Clemens Weiss

The source of the Stux look is, of course, the ripped and taped photographs of Mike and Doug Starn. At Ronald Feldman (31 Mercer Street), Mr. Weiss takes similar methods into three-dimensional space, piecing together structures and containers both large and small out of jagged sheets and sections of clear glass.

Mr. Weiss's structures — which have been made over the last eight years and remain on view through Oct. 8 — are both delicate and macabre. They include large shrinelike cubes over 8 feet on a side, whose central feature is one of the artist's undistinguished paintings, and small boxes holding a single book or object that are usually stacked before these paintings like votive offerings.

In the two largest works, which dominate the front gallery, the paintings and objects are color-cued. In the installation titled "2.1," a painting of a jaguar is paired with two big ceramic statues of jaguars and with predominantly yellow books and ob-

jects, all in their own glass boxes. Red is the connecting link in the shrine across the way.

Mr. Weiss's objects and especially his paintings are nothing without their rough-hewn containers, which project a very familiar kind of assemblage onto a nearly architectural scale. As with Mr. Anderson's paintings, we are once more presented with materials that have seen a lot of wear and tear, that are infused with nostalgia and exhaustion and otherworldliness. The highly suspect strength of Mr. Weiss's ensembles comes almost entirely from the way they position themselves immediately and artificially in the past.