

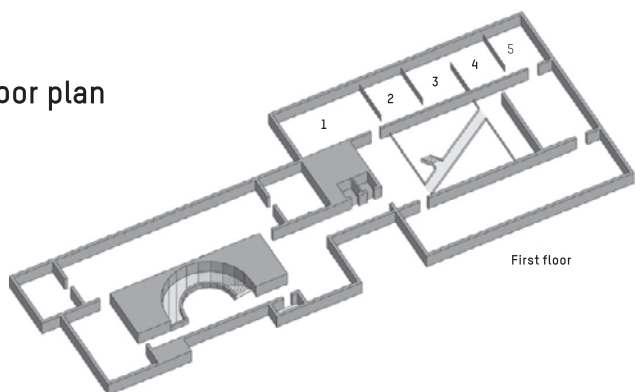
zwischen den Worten – entre les mots – fra le parole

Hommage à Mumprecht

August 23 to November 10 2013

In honor of Rudolf Mumprecht, the Kunstmuseum Bern is mounting works from the artist's studio as well as loans from many collectors and collections all over Switzerland. The Kunstmuseum Bern is fulfilling a long-cherished wish of the artist and his wife Esther Roth Mumprecht with this show. The selection of exhibits focuses on the artist's late work in which he exclusively engages with the aura of language and its visual evocativeness. Under the title *zwischen den Worten – entre les mots – fra le parole*, the exhibition is exploring the space of Mumprecht's distinctive artistic signature and investigates the radius of the interdependencies between word and image. "Space" is comprehended in context here both as poetic and artistic.

Floor plan



Room 1: Between Words

The first room with the same title as the exhibition presents the single and two-word pictures. They are suggestive of the slogans and messages we find in advertising. But, as their monumental format and sheer visual forcefulness reveal, they have very different goals. Within the show, the individual exhibits seem to physically and vividly interact with one another. Simultaneously both a fact and a question, a statement such as *demain* (1994) can be related to *Maintenant* (1994) as much as it can be to *Perché no* (1992). We discover the same kind of wordplay in the elementary juxtaposition of *Pain Paix* (1994) and *Guerra Fame* (1995), one vocalized in radiant white on white with the other in grey and black. The works *Tenet* (1995) and *001* (1993) play with the magic that seems to link figures or letters. The combinations of words

in the picture *Tenet* are based on the sentence of a traditional palindrome. The words can be read either vertically or horizontally, although the Latin can only be deciphered in part. "Sator" means "the sower", "tenet" translates as "he holds", "rota" as "wheel", while "Arepo" has no clear meaning. This magical game is repeated in *001*. Is it a code or a digital sign? Does it signify beginning? We cannot say definitely.

Room 2: Stream of Consciousness

"Stream of consciousness" is a notion that originated in psychological research and is used today in literary studies to describe a narrative technique. It generally involves the articulation of—mostly subjective—sensations, perception and emotions in a non-linear and seemingly haphazard way. The ambience of the works in this room changes from the monumentality of the statements in the first room to poetic lettering design. The written image resembles a richly visual letter in which the gesticulatory handwriting conflates with the meaning of the words. As we read these images our thoughts are carried away by them, bear with them, or are led astray. But we are not left unmoved. Analogous to Paul Klee's pivotal statement that "art ... makes visible", here the legible leads via the invisible to the truth of vision (Sichtwahren).

The picture *ohne Titel* (*Untitled*, 1971) stands on its own and is without words. It was presented to the Kunstmuseum Bern as a gift last year from a private patron. The segmentation of a written letter is manifest in the formal design. *Ohne Titel* (*Untitled*) resembles a letter matrix with a window for the opening and information, the body and concluding section. In the work *temps, tant de temps* (1995) the matrix is the "rock". Opposite it are the infinitesimally small "grains of sand"—like our stream-of-consciousness thoughts—scattered by the wind.

Room 3: Notion of Time

The notion of time of time is a subject that fascinated and fascinates Mumprecht continually. Already in the first exhibition room there are significant expressions of time such as *demain* and *Maintenant*, and here too temporal expressions in all sorts of languages play a key role, as in the work *Zeit temps tempo* (1987-1989). The passing of time and remembrance of the past, repeated shifts and overlapping of the past and hopes for the future are expressed in diversely

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stratified language images. Positive associations connected to the terms "soleil", "espace", "arc-en-ciel" are confronted with terms that we tend to link with the more dark sides of life: "minuit", "temps perdu", "zeiteilig".

Room 4: Music for the Eyes

This room focuses on hearing and seeing. Analogue to Kandinsky's interpretation in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, specific rhythms can be traced in the following works: The concert plays "toi, ich, ohr", "vis à vis", "jetzt opening" and is accompanied by a cloud "Wolke" and everything you can see: "ce que l'on voit". The piano resonates with "joie de vie" and "farfalla", while the trumpet blows "B", "Oh", "New" or "E aaA". Finally the drums drum attention with "2,7,6"!

Visitors find themselves in awe of the artist's rich alphabet. The colors radiate in red, yellow, blue and green, while letters, words, figures and characters fill the spaces between the staves. The picture surfaces and square formats as well as the structure of a written sheet bring an element of calm and order into the uproar of the script, which is so vividly colorful it reminds us of pop art. But, on the whole, a party ambience takes command, and the notes dictate a rhythm that is allegro at the least. The mixture of languages too unfolds to create a synthesis between sound and image in language, as in the picture *vis a vis* (1996): vis a vis / wie / vie (life) / chi (who) / qui (who or here) / di chi (from whom). It all flows together into a roaring feast for the senses.

Room 5: Growth and Decay

Mumprecht's black-and-white language pictures follow on after the explosions of color we experienced in the music pictures. The artist has won the hearts of many art enthusiasts with the expressive and free gestures of his lines and by using terms such as "joie", "amour" or "liberté". These positively connoted messages appeal to the public. The picture *vie, oui je t'aime* (1981) stands here as representative for the many life-affirming emotions inherent in Mumprecht's artworks. They are affiliated to the natural and elemental forces of life itself. However, the statements made by the cosmos of an idealist—sometimes even of an idealist "contre coeur"—would not be art if an awareness of the unfathomable and knowledge of the finite nature of life were not inherent in it too.

Biography: Rudolf Mumprecht

1918	Born in Basel and grew up in Bern.
1938	Completed his studies as a cartographer in Bern; worked freelance as a self-taught draftsman and lithographer.
1939-1945	He spent the war years in active military service. In his free time he sketched and painted.
1949-1954	Lived in Paris where he executed especially lithographs and aquatint sheets. Mumprecht discovered the expressive qualities and gestures of art informel. The art scene in Paris became the benchmark of his work.
1960-1964	He stayed in Paris again. Explored the contemporary approaches of art-informel painting, tachism and abstract expressionism.
1964	The artist lived and worked in Köniz near Bern, since 1986 often also alternately in Brione near Locarno. Around the end of the 1960s Mumprecht discovered script and its signs as a means of artistic expression and continued to explore this subject matter over the years, developing it into his individual style.
1970	From this time onwards abstraction and script become the sole subject matter of his work.

1980 The meaning of language begins to dominate the innovations in his designs. Between words lies the power of images.

In the era of new media, Mumprecht remains true to the quadratic pictures and drawing and painting as his creative means.

Mid-1990s Was a highly fecund phase in his career.

The artist prefers to work with large formats (190x190 cm).

1998 Culture prize of the Burgergemeinde Bern.

2003 Award from the UBS Cultural Foundation.

2008 First solo exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Bern for his 90th birthday.

AGENDA

Public guided tours (in German)

Sunday, 11:00 a.m.: August 25, November 10

Tuesday, 7:00 p.m.: September 17, October 15

Exhibition admission fee only, no booking required.

INFORMATION

Curator

Liselotte Wirth Schnöllner

Admission fee

CHF 14.00 / reduced CHF 10.00

Private guided tours, school classes

Tel.: 031 328 09 11, vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch

Opening hours

Tuesday 10:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.

Wednesday-Sunday: 10:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.

CATALOGUE (IN GERMAN)

zwischen den Worten – entre les mots – fra le parole. Hommage à Mumprecht. Eds. Kunstmuseum Bern, Liselotte Wirth Schnöllner. With essay contributions by Matthias Frehner, Liselotte Wirth Schnöllner, Alice Henkes and Marianne Keller Tschirren. Plates of all the works in the exhibition.

The exhibition was kindly supported by:



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