

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

Sabatini Building

Santa Isabel, 52

Nouvel Building

Ronda de Atocha s/n

28012 Madrid

Tel: (34) 91 774 10 00

Opening hours

Monday to Saturday

and public holidays

from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Sundays

from 10:00 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.

opens the whole Museum,

from 2:15 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

visit to Collection 1

and one temporary exhibition

(check Website)

Closed on Tuesdays

Exhibition rooms in all venues

will be cleared 15 minutes

before closing time.



www.museoreinasofia.es

Palacio de Velázquez

Parque del Retiro, Madrid

Opening Hours

From October to March

Every day from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

From April to September

Every day from 10:00 a.m.

to 10:00 p.m.

Related activity

A propósito de...

Rémy Zaugg.

Questions of Perception

Guided visit led by the

Mediation team

Every Sundays at 12:30 p.m.

(From 3 April)

Education program developed
with the sponsorship of
Fundación Banco Santander



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Exhibition 31 March – 28 August 2016

Parque del Retiro, Palacio de Velázquez

Rémy Zaugg

Questions of Perception



Situation on while shooting for the film *Projection (Le matin)*, on August 25th, 1990

Coorganized:

**Museum für
Gegenwartskunst
Siegen**



With the supports of:

fundación suiza para la cultura
prohelvetia

Hans and Renée
Müller-Meylan Foundation



The work of Swiss artist Rémy Zaugg (Courgenay, 1943 – Basel, 2005) spans four decades. The exhibition *Questions of Perception*, fruit of the close collaboration between the Reina Sofia museum and the Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Siegen, reviews the facet of Zaugg's work associated with the study of perception, with the relationship between text and images, between colour and language, between the real and the subjective, between plane and space.

An evident tension between opposites runs through the artist's career, from his first ventures into the perceptual deconstruction of milestones in the history of painting to the works on aluminium of his final years. But Zaugg did not only explore the genre of painting. He also devoted his attention to architecture, to the curating of exhibitions and to interventions in urban spaces. Above all, he was an indefatigable theorizer; a first-rate intellectual committed to engaging with the way in which we perceive the world.

The artist always identified as a turning point his first encounter, as a young man in 1963, with Barnett Newman's painting *Day Before One*, at the Kunstmuseum Basel, an institution with which he was to maintain links of one kind or another for the rest of his life. Painted in 1951, *Day Before One* had an impact of such magnitude as to radically confound him, negating all of the perceptual capacities he had used up until then. Not long after that, as if in an attempt at reassembling those lost skills, he threw himself into a monumental project that was to occupy him for the next five years: in an endeavour that marked the irruption of language in his work, he dissected a reproduction of an Impressionist-era Cézanne, *La maison du pendu* [The Hanged Man's House, 1872-1873] in a study entitled *27 esquisses perceptives*

d'un tableau [27 perceptive sketches of a picture, 1963-1968]. This meticulous breakdown of the constituent elements of the painting – neither a re-representation nor a copy, but an exercise in the translation of painting into language – is not a text as such, in so far as Zaugg equates the functions of the brush and the pencil, and at times 'composes' his textual analysis as if it were a painting.

27 esquisses perceptives d'un tableau is an essential work whose echoes reverberate in later series such as *Une feuille de papier* [A Sheet of Paper], a comprehensive suite of pictures on brown paper, all with the same format and the same shade of brown, which the artist painted between 1979 and 1990, so intense was his urge to investigate and so irrepressible his curiosity. These are sheets of paper on which he scrawled, scribbled and sketched as if he were analysing of motive in real time. If Zaugg transformed painting into language in the *esquisses perceptives*, these sheets of paper are a shared support for painting and writing. The two practices are intertwined, the different temporalities inherent in each jumbled together in intricate semantic strata.

In the series entitled *Für ein Bild* [For a Picture, 1986-1987], conceived as the analytical construction of an image, Zaugg



EYE/I, 1994. Private collection, Germany

turned to a standard picture format, on which painted words are arranged on the white surface. These are words that construct a possibility. In some cases the canvas remains blank, because the language has not come about, has not taken place, perhaps because it was annulled in a dense mesh of uncertainties. In this way we understand the emphasis on the nullity of the outcome, on the persistence of the white, leading to a 'Mallarmean' atmosphere in which tyranny of finality, of purpose, the desire to achieve goals loses strength.

Meanwhile, *Un mot – un support* [A Word – A Support, 1986-1997] has its conceptual origin in the size of the word itself. Using a neutral typeface created by the Swiss typographer Adrian Frutiger, Zaugg alludes to the deliberations that transcend the imperturbable relationship between work and receptor, and

space and time enter uninhibitedly into the equation, giving us new tools with which to challenge our here and our now.

Aluminium, with the language silk-screened onto it, made its appearance as a support in Zaugg's work of the nineties. There was a decisive break with colour, the language took on an unprecedented mannerism and industrial production came to predominate over conventional pictorial practices. In three major groups of works on which he worked almost right up to his death in 2005 – *De la cécité*, *De la mort* and *Le monde voit* [Of Blindness (1994-1997), About Death (1998-2002/2005) and The world sees (1993-2000)] – language and colour move into an ambivalent realm of interrelationships. The language casts off its schematic and fragmentary condition and starts to flirt, more or less intensely, with poetry.