

失境寻踪——多丽丝·厄恩斯特个展

狮語画廊在线展厅

Lost and Found ——Doris Ernst Solo Exhibition

Leo Gallery Online Showroom

Artist: Doris Ernst (Germany)

艺术家：多丽丝·厄恩斯特（德国）

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网址和二维码 Address and QR code :

展览导语 Preface

(translating)

梦想能够不停的旅行，看到世界上不同的精彩。

一份儿时的憧憬，把艺术家 Doris Ernst 引导进了一个需要不停旅行的职业，最终带入了艺术的殿堂。

每隔几年，Doris 会在工作的安排下，移居到不同的城市，彻底了解那里的情况并且投入紧张激烈的工作。

对于大多数人来说，能够在世界各地工作，好像是在不停的免费旅行。

然而 Doris 所处的工作环境，需要同时在紧张的节奏中处理各种关系而且更多的是需要面对国际化的灾难事件。

一段在纽约的生活经历，让 Doris 的精神领域打开了通往自由和艺术的道路。

在博览纽约众多的画廊和艺术展中，她逐渐找到了自我，看到了生命在纷繁世界中所扮演的角色。

Doris 的作品中，清晰的表现出当代设计和艺术所特有的特殊痕迹，以包豪斯为核心的线条结构和逻辑缜密的线状体系，结合层层叠加的平面结构形成了一种特有的视觉维度。看似无穷的排列组合内各个独立的有机体有迹可循的生存在一张巨大的棋盘上，仿佛看到一座座不同的现代都市。

如同城市地图上的错落线条表现下，颜色表达着各种世界观。从纽约的繁华摩登到非洲的植被茂盛，从北欧的简洁明朗到东方的传统含蓄。从 Doris 的艺术中仿佛看到文艺复兴时期作品中常见的某种隐喻和充满戏剧的内容。许多作品大量运用黑色线条覆盖在表面，充满控制的情感下涌动着不同的力量，好像带有实质的尖锐视线穿透画布抵达某种深渊，某冲深邃但是充满了希望曙光的力量从画面上指透内心。秩序和灵动同时呈现在看似疯狂的线条上，近距离靠近这些作品，好像随时能够窥探到芸芸众生中每个独特的个体上所自然发散的人性。

本次展览精选了 Doris Ernst 2017-2019 年的近四十件作品，来开启 2020 年狮语画廊首次开放的在线展览，本次展览中 Doris 还将捐赠四件作品的款项给受到冠状病毒影响的武汉，以表达她对灾区人们的关爱与希望。

Artist: Doris Ernst

Doris Ernst (born 1966 in Germany) currently lives with her family in Shanghai and Berlin. She is a self-taught artist. Her intuition and creativity are an expression of her living, traveling and working in various cities around the world like New York, Amsterdam, Stockholm, Addis Abeba, New Delhi and Japan. These different cultures, people, societies and their art forms have influenced her as well as the friendship with many artists in these countries. She has participated in a several exhibitions in Shanghai.

Doris work has been influenced very strongly by her experiences living in mega cities. The density, noise, speed in contrast to nature, calmness and slowness. Her path towards making her own art started with the strong desire to finding herself again after long years of being a full time working mother of 3 children- working in the clearly structured field of law, working in humanitarian assistance which included visiting Haiti after the earthquake as well as refugee camps in Africa and Syria. She was looking for a way to cope with the experience of joy and disappointment in her personal life as well as sorrow over the death of loved ones. All of this combined with global politics, deteriorating environmental problems, divisions in societies as well as the speed of developments in the age of internet and artificial intelligence brought her to the point where she needed a means of expression to get the constantly spinning thought out of the head. Dealing with chaos and order.

Her work is dominated by the motto "Trying to make sense". Which includes the wish for finding hope in a complex world.

Doris loves to work with spatulas instead of brushes. Applying paint like that always includes an element of randomness and surprise which again is a similarity to life where perfection can never be completely be planned. The apparent order of the stripes and the grids is however not regular. The stripe as a symbol of routine are however never the same and in this representing individuality. Overlaying layers show the multitude of different influences we face in our life.

Her work also includes a series of works on paper called "fading". Which deals with the issue of not losing yourself, your integrity, your values and personality under the constant outside pressure.

Another series of works including a collection of found objects and markings on crushed/crumbled paper as well as prints with broken pieces of tiles from demolished houses deals with the question of transience and vulnerability.

The current situation /crisis clearly shows that rationality is (at least not alone/ by itself) the solution. Humanity, emotions, caring for each other empathy and love are need as well. Struggling and standing together while sharing our concerns and thoughts will give us the hope we need to find a brighter tomorrow in the chaos of our time.

Solo / Two-person Exhibitions

2019 Look and See, The Space Gallery, Shanghai, China

Group Exhibition

2019 The Multi-Imagination of Light, M50, Shanghai, China

2018 Hidden Secrets, Poppy Gallery, Shanghai, China

Leo Gallery Dialogue with Doris Ernst

A traveler and seeker

您在许多城市工作与生活过，我们很好奇您是在什么情况下去到这么多不同的地方的？

LG: You used to live and work in many cities. We are curious about in what conditions that you have been to so many places. Could you please describe it?

Doris: I come from a small town in rural Germany near the Dutch border. My father worked in a factory and we did not have enough money to travel when I was young. So when I started to earn my own money I was very eager to see the world. That's also why I started in a special studying program that included law, politics and languages and also working abroad. During my training I did internships abroad in Marseille, Vancouver and Moscow in the Gorbachev era. Then at the beginning of the 1990th I moved to New York City where I worked mostly dealing with questions of international law but also restitution to mostly people from the large Jewish community who had been to send to concentration camps and people who had claims top property that was taken away from them by the Nazis in the eastern part of Germany. While living in this great wonderful "world

city” New York I was at the same time directly confronted with German history. Which was no longer just a textbook in history lessons at school and my father’s stories but real. On the other hand New York was like a revelation and the place where I discovered the art world.

After this I basically moved to another country every 3-5 years, working either in law or also in cultural exchange in cities like Amsterdam, Stockholm, Houston (Texas) plus some short term assignments in Jakarta and New Delhi.

Before coming to Shanghai my work in Berlin brought me a complete new inside which was the field of humanitarian assistance. Evaluating and organizing help projects after the earthquake in Haiti as well as attending conferences in Africa and visiting refugee camps in Ethiopia/Somalia, being the liaison for UNWRA and visiting aid projects in the Palestinian parts of Israel gave me a whole new understanding of priorities in life. It was also most impressive to meet so many engaged and idealistic people working for NGOs and the United Nations and other international agencies. Working the Syria desk for 2 year and meeting displaced people in Jordan and Lebanon, hearing their stories made and seeing how traumatizing war is made me re-evaluate my own look at the world.

Finally, I came to China which meant to me living in a country where I have almost no common means of communication with most people due to the fact that I failed to learn the language properly.

I started on this long journey because I was curious, and I wanted to learn but also in the hope that I would find the place where I would really like to settle. To date however I am still a traveler and seeker.

LG:What experiences would be the stimulus and motivation of your artistic creation while you were roving around different cities?

Doris: The most obvious is my direct surrounding. That is nature, the light, architecture, colors and lines. It can be the shiny glass facades and regular shapes of skyscrapers but also the giant trees taking back the ruins in the jungle of Cambodia. It’s the red of China and the bright colors of India versus the black and white of the “cool” and hipster world of mega cities.

Secondly, I look at the old, traditional art and handy craft which to me tells you a lot about the soul of a country and its people. Here you find shapes and patterns but also history, believe and meaning.

LG: What is the relationship between traveling and art in your opinion?

Doris: In order to experience something new I love to use all my senses. Today I can “travel” to almost every country in the world by just clicking with my fingertip on my computer or phone. But webcams, reading and looking at photos is not the same as the real immersion into a new world.

To me personally however it is often not the big highlights and most popular sight of countries and cities that I find most attractive me most when I travel. Well o.k., almost to my surprise touching the marble of Taj Mahal felt actually more stimulating than I thought (even being surrounded by hundreds of people) but the real stimulation comes from experiencing the everyday normal life in a place you visit. Driving with my wonderful talkative Indian taxi driver, listening to his Sigh prayer music and seeing a new world pass by (and smelling it through the open windows in the hot air of India) brought up a ton of thoughts. Travelling stirs up emotions and that is what inspires me to new art works.

Travelling also means leaving your routine and comfort zone behind. It has a feeling of embarking to something new, let yourself be surprised and feeling free and loose, leaving behind the burdens and responsibilities that

limit our thoughts. Feeling free from all the “must do” things in order to also free the mind. Once you let go of the “normality” that’s when creativity has more room.

Painting is like life, There is an order in the chaos

LG: What is the origin of the colors and shapes in your paintings? Where does it come from? Is it the abstraction in your mind or the concrete shadows in the cities?

Doris: Thinking of the colours and shapes in my paintings I must admit that they are very intuitive.

They just somehow happen. But looking at them after I finish a work actually makes me understand where they come from it is like looking into my soul.

I love black. But black for me does not necessarily have a negative, dark and sinister connotation. Growing up in the 1980s in a quite catholic, conservative and suburban surrounding in rural Germany made me rebel against the norms by listening to punk and new wave music and wearing black clothes. Black is so clear and pure like there are no real shades of it and if you mix it basically stays black.

I also love the straight lines and forms of Bauhaus. It gives me a feeling of clarity, efficiency, it is very organized, rational and there is a logic to it. I love if you find this quality in the architecture of a city or the map of Manhattan for example or in clothing or for example in Swedish design. sometimes find that buildings, sculptures or clothes with lots of ornaments, unnecessary/fuzzy features make me nervous and distracting.

The repetitiveness of shapes in my paintings has a meditative aspect not only when I apply the paint but also while looking at it you can find a structure or sometimes a scratched grid. There is the order in the chaos. The lines are applied by spatula-so they are always straight. The colours are applied one after the other, so they do not mix.

5. 您的作品中保留有许多偶然与无意的细节，但整体上却是乱中有序，可以就此谈谈您对混乱与秩序的看法吗？

LG: You think you have a fixed plan for tomorrow, and you have it all figured out and then something comes up and during the day nothing is like you planned. That is what happens when you put the spatula into the paint. You have an idea as to what it will look like when you scratch it over the canvas or paper but you can never be completely sure.

Doris: In a lot of my works you can see a certain regularity and repetitiveness. Which is like our life. There are days, hours and seasons. But then again, they are all different and they are never exactly like we expected or planned. We cannot foresee what will happen. When I put my spatula in the paint and create stripes it is this “intentional randomness” that I love. The repetition is calming the thoughts and gives me the sometimes much needed peace of mind and a sense of order and regularity.

But it is the randomness – no stripe looks like the other, they are all different – that is what makes the stripes interesting. It’s the unpredictability, the element of surprise that make out the essence of the painting and creates the necessary tension. How boring would it be if we could foresee everything and everything would always go according to plan. At the same time, we love and need a certain order. In complete chaos it is hard to find the way.

Giving the painting an order or putting a sort of grid on top of the painting that is what gives us hold or security, but at the same time we need differences and individuality to thrive and have room to evolve and to be innovative.

LG: How do artistic creation and your concern for social, environmental and political issues complement each other?

Doris: If we look at our own private life – at work, in the relationship to friends and family - even if we feel privileged and have wonderful people around us and we live comfortably the overall state of the world we live in also affects us.

In an age of climate change, diminishing resources, political turmoil in many regions of the world and huge differences in living conditions it is hard to feel happy just for yourself and forget about the rest – in particular if you have children and think about their future.

It is hard to make sense of it all and very easy nowadays to get lost in depressing thoughts.

That is one of the reasons why I called my series of works “trying to make sense”. The world seems to be more chaotic every day and I am looking for an order/ a bigger picture that gives me hope because living an egocentric life just looking at self-interest like many people do is no solution for me.

Living together respectfully, tolerant and caring for each other’s concerns that is what some might see in my paintings where every stripe and stroke is different but they coexist on the canvas and together build a greater picture that even might have a sort of harmony and therefore symbolizes hope.

7. 您如何将现实观点转化为视觉语言的？

LG: How do you transform realistic views into visual language?

Doris: That is a very difficult question because I don’t. I always find it interesting if people look at my paintings and tell me what they see in them. Because I almost never imagine real/realistic things when I create my works. I somehow express my feelings through the painting but never an image.

But this is the beauty of abstract art that everybody can see something different in it. It does not have to be the same thing the artist wanted to express. To me an abstract painting fulfils its purpose if it stimulates any kind of feeling or inspires an image or just a thought in the viewers mind. Which also underlines the idea that we are not all the same but yet again individuals with our own wonderful imagination.

8. 您认为您的艺术语言是更倾向于感性还是理性？

LG: What would you describe the tendency of your artistic language? Emotional or rational?

Doris: It is both because that is exactly the fight in mind.

My education or better to say my educational choices are foremost based on rationality. I loved mathematics when I was in school, I chose to learn Latin with its wonderful structure and logic whereas I kind of hated French with all these terrible exceptions that did not make sense. I studied law and I to a certain extent believe in rules and regulations.

You can find all of this in my work, the order, regularity, repetition, straight lines and clarity of colours.

This side of me is in constant struggle with my emotions. I am a very sensitive person, I need feelings in my everyday life, I need smiles or even sometimes anger can be o.k., I need and feel a lot of empathy and love. But feeling cannot only make you happy but also hurt a lot.

Looking at my paintings with the ideas of order and chaos in mind you could also describe rationality as the orderly part and emotions as the chaos. If you completely let your emotions rule than you could end up in disaster. The ups and downs can be quite high but also very low.

If you also listen to reason, be rational and don't let yourself be touched too much by all the misery than you have a sort of grid that gives you hold, boundaries, principles, values and hope.

All things that show marks of time and life and history are valuable

9. 请您谈谈作品“快乐的日子”和“持续斗争的”。

LG: Would you please talk about painting “Happy days” and “Constant Struggle”.

Doris: The paintings are a bit like the contrast I just described. Different sides of me came out.

In “Happy days” you can see an underlying grid of stripes in black, grey, silver and white and my husband who studied mathematics really liked it that way. It reminded him of the façade of a skyscraper by Mies van der Rohe. I looked at it for 2 weeks and was not totally satisfied with it. It was too exact, too orderly. So one day when I came home and really felt good I thought that colour was the solution. So I applied many different colours on top of the shades of black, grey and silver. It took quite some time because each time I used a different colour I needed to clean all my material. But it was an exuberating feeling. It was like when the sun comes out in spring. Everything is blooming and you leave the grey of winter behind. That is why I called it “Happy days”.

The Painting “Constant struggle” however comes from a period, where I had some conflicts in my life at work and at home. I was not so very happy. You can see and feel all the scratches on the surface of the painting. The underlying order and nice structure of regular stripes in various colours is “overshadowed” and scratched. I felt hurt, disappointed and frustrated.

But I decided to use the yellow for the “shadows”, the “disturbance”. Yellow is the colour of brightness and sunshine. So there is light at the end of the tunnel and I did not feel completely lost (like in the painting “frustration”) I was disappointed with other people but not with life itself. We all get scratches over time. But that is how our personality is formed- by all these different kinds of experiences.

请您谈谈对您影响最大或印象最深刻的事件和艺术作品。

LG: Please tell us about the events and art works that impact on or impressed you most.

Doris: When we lived in Houston my children were still. Living in suburbia in Texas was kind of hard in a lot of ways. People spend much time alone in their cars or in malls. However nature/outdoors in the US was great and Houston has the Menil collection (!) which does not only have great contemporary art but also a Cy Twombly pavilion and the Rothko Chapel. I had liked Mark Rothko for some time as one of the pioneers of abstract art. I was fascinated by the depth of the colors. Entering the Rothko Chapel I was first disappointed because suddenly the wonderful bright colors were gone. But understanding the feelings that Rothko put into these works I discovered what a unique place the chapel is where one is surrounded by these large black/gray fields of paint (and pain...). I love Rothko's innovativeness regarding the material he used, the long process of trying/layering to reach the final breath-taking results.

Another artist who influenced me is Gerhard Richter. Not only seeing his painting in exhibitions but in particular by seeing him work in the famous documentary film. Watching him work with his squeegee/scrapper impressed me and actually made me buy my first spatulas in a hardware store to try out scratching. At that time, I had no knowledge about squeegees for silk screen printing and other fancy, expensive art material.

After I had already been working in my own little studio for 2 years learning a lot about different paints and materials by just trying them out for myself my husband gave me this wonderful catalogue of Soulage for my birthday. And the paintings just spoke to my heart. All this wonderful black and the marks that look a bit like the ones I had discovered using my spatulas. This gave me the confidence I need to continue on my path and stay true to myself.

When I came to China one of the exhibitions that impressed me most was the Yu Youhan solo show at the PSA. I was so happy to see the repetitiveness of his stripes that he applied with his brush. This again was a boost for my confidence -not being alone.

It took me a long time to call myself an artist. I started to do all my art just for myself and not for others and in particular I never thought of my art as something that others would value. Particularly coming from Germany, I am so conditioned to believe in proper education and qualification. So how could anyone see any value in what I do as I never studied at an art academy or had any special expertise other than what I had discovered just for myself over the years of self-study and all my thinking.

The final step on this path to becoming an artist was meeting all these wonderful artists in Shanghai in person. Hearing their stories- the stories of their lives, of what motivates them, how they define themselves, how they have self-doubts as well, how they struggle. I felt so privileged to find friends who shared their way of thinking with me in a personal way not the way art is sometimes described in a highly intellectual paper of art critics. Especially Shen Fan has helped me a lot. He told me that patience is what I needed and that being on the right path, following a path is already a lot. Walking patiently instead of running, rushing, aiming at achievements. Taking your own time brings us closer to the goal. Being able to wait and letting things settle in against all the speed of today's time was great advice.

您选择用了常见的物品，比如刷墙的刮板、捡来的石头、自制的纸板等作为创作工具，是不是反映了一种您的生活的理念，是怎样的理念？您在艺术里追求的是什么？

LG: You chose to use common items, such as scrapers for wall painting, picked stones, homemade cardboard, etc. as the creative tool. Does this reflect a concept of your life, what kind of concept? What are you pursuing in art?

Doris: I have always been very observant of my surroundings. Not only did I do a lot of crafty things with my children with whatever we found in the forest. I loved all the tools in my father's basement.

When I went out to buy my first art supplies, they were kind of expensive in Germany so I went to a hardware store too to see what I could find there. That is how I discovered the spatulas/scrapers that are normally used by handymen to apply plaster to walls.

As a self-taught artist I never followed any instructions and liked not being told how to do things.

I am very curious and I like experimenting with whatever comes into my hands. Especially when I have leftover paint or material, I produce a lot of little pieces on paper.

There is this longing for perfectionism in our society which stresses everybody out. I am not perfect; my art is not supposed to be perfect and so is my material.

I also collect a lot of things that have been thrown away. They have a story to tell like the broken tiles from demolished houses that I use for small prints. Old houses have a history along with the people who lived there. Weathered things like rusty wire or metal objects, wood, twisted traffic signs with lots of dents and scratches. These objects were kicked, left unattended - they lost their function and value. Something weathered, old, rusty, broken and imperfect can still be beautiful. To me all things that show marks of time and life and history are valuable.

Trying to make sense

您作为一位职业女性，三个孩子的母亲，生活和工作已经非常忙碌和辛苦，为什么还要做艺术，是什么驱动力令您创作艺术？创作给您带来了什么？

LG: As a professional woman and a three children's mother, you have already been very busy and hard. Why do you want to do art and what are the driving forces that make you create art? What does creation bring to you?

Doris: Growing up we must make a lot of decisions. We can follow the path that society and/or family is expecting of us.

I followed a carrier (with some extend of ambition). I became a wife and (full time working) mother of 3 children, I was also a daughter and took care of my parents needs when they got older. For a long time in my live I tried to fill out all these roles as best as I could.

At some point I discovered that I was basically just functioning, doing what was expected of me, living with the responsibility and constant concerns that all these roles bring with them. Making compromises every day to achieve some sort of harmony and keep it all going.

However, I had lost myself in the process. What was it I had wanted to achieve at the beginning?

Looking frustrated at my teenagers during puberty in a world that was going crazier all the time, a world full of people being more interested in buying a bigger cars and expensive clothes then in climate change or real happiness.

Being confronted with the illness and death of my parents I was at a point where I had to figure out who I had become and who I wanted to be.

Contemporary art had always been my passive passion. But I longed to be actively passionate about something – something for myself, a way to express my feelings, weaknesses and a way to look for answers, go deeper and not just stay on the surface.

Putting this idea into action was a way to deal with existential questions (hence the name of the series “trying to make sense”) but art also put me in touch with a lot of like-minded people. Art is a dialogue and artists dare to show their soul to others in all kinds of ways.

这次中国发生疫情期间您在哪里，您经历了什么，在此期间艺术在您的生活中又扮演了什么角色？

LG: Where were you during the virus outbreak in China, what did you experience, and what role did art play in your life during this period?

Doris: During the virus outbreak I was in Shanghai. I experienced all the uncertainty, the lock down restrictions, the sadness over the victims, saw the fear in the faces of the people, the constant overflow in the news and social media coverage brought us – all the up and down we all had to go through.

It is an experience that none of us will forget. It goes deep into the bone to the very heart of our existence. We were so used to have our own free choices and suddenly everything was put into question. We always reflect upon our priorities in life and suddenly we see ourselves just longing to get our sometimes boring, normal life back that we had put into question so often before. Normality has a value.

Crisis situations can bring out the best and worst in people. I am happy to see so much solidarity. I hope that soon we can leave our isolation, encounter other people again and see smiles not hidden behind masks.

My art helped me to structure my thoughts in this period where we all felt tense lost our inner balance. Things that were important before suddenly had no meaning anymore. I made a painting before Chinese New Year that had many bright colored stripes. When I came home from my office driving through the deserted streets of Shanghai, I put a lot of dark shades on top of the stripes. Then by scratching off the black some of the brightness of the colors came back and that is where we are now. Waiting for the first spring colors of nature. Hoping that the situation will get better not only here in Shanghai but in all affected areas.

您认为艺术与生活的关系是什么？

LG: What do you think the relationship between art and life ?

Doris: Over the years somehow my life felt so heavy with the responsibilities for my family, in my job and with all the stuff I had – a whole household of a 5 person family. I kept on thinking of the lightness of life/of being when I was younger – like the title of the book by Milan Kundera. Art gave me back this lightness without being superficial.

When I go into my studio I manage (most of the time) to leave a lot behind like my “to-do-list”, conflicts, concerns. The spinning of all these thoughts stops. I manage to be in a state where there is nothing I MUST do but lots of things I CAN do. Then colors and pattern and creative ideas take over. They sometimes start spinning as well – but it feels more like being on a light cloud, floating, like an opportunity instead of being dragged down and stressed.

In meditation you try to relax and empty your brain completely. When I am working on my art I explore myself. I am not driven by others, by expectations, by circumstances and obligations. I am not reacting, I am creating.

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During the virus crisis I have been staying in Shanghai the whole time.

Like everybody else I experience the uncertainty about this new kind of thread that you cannot see.

Having worked in the field of humanitarian assistance for many years in this difficult time my thoughts are with all the brave people who help others in need.

After natural catastrophes like earthquakes, cholera outbreaks as well as the current virus crisis many people depend on assistance from others.

Doctors and health care workers and many others kind of helpers are taking risks for themselves and their families for the sake of others.

We all depend on them and that is why I would like to show my support.