

Silvia Bächli
10 April – 22 May 2010

The Galerie Nelson-Freeman is pleased to present Silvia Bächli's fourth solo exhibition at the gallery.

For 30 years, Silvia Bächli has explored every aspect of drawing, for its flexibility and immediacy a medium more than any other that allows her to express with great intensity the fleeting moments of life. Using the body and its movements as a starting point, Silvia Bächli's work spreads into everything that can be considered part of the realm of feeling. In this way she presents a reality made up of fragments and impressions. She takes no interest in grandiloquence, but prefers to give greater importance to details, small things, minutiae; "I try to sense those words that we have on the tips of our tongues but we can never precisely define."*

Bächli's oeuvre revolves around a number of recurring themes and patterns: Straight or curved lines, checkerboard patterns, text extracts, landscapes, fragments of the human form. Her work tries neither to be figurative nor abstract. "Crossed lines can become stars or perhaps the lines on the palm of one's hand ... It is quite possible that something figurative springs to the mind of the viewer, but there are too few concrete signs to say exactly what it is with any certainty."*

The creative process leading to Bächli's work follows a number of stages. The first is one of creation: the artist produces a large number of drawings, created using a limited palette of colours and simple shapes. She works mainly in gouache using shades of monochrome grey. Not long ago, colours began to appear in her work, and following recent stays in Finland and Iceland, she uses colours that evoke those Scandinavian landscapes with a specific chromatic range going from pale blue to the colours of earth. During the next stage she makes her selection among the drawings. "Drawing involves, trying something new, doing research, finding things, playing with them, remembering and inventing things. Then, there is a second stage of selection, verification and elimination."* From this editing, there is a final stage when a specific selection of the drawings is put up for exhibition. This part of the process is an integral part of her work, and she always takes into account the exhibition space and its specific character. Smaller works are either hung individually or in a group and the distance between the works is as important as the drawings themselves in the same way as punctuation in poetry is, or moments of silence in music. "These sets are composed of multiple parts and resemble the notation of music. This type of singing brings together a number of different voices. There are moments when all the voices are heard together, moments of fusion. There are also pauses, voices *en masse* and echoes... this is how I see the world: different layers which rub off on each other."*

Since 1996, she has also been showing her work in "table-showcases". This technique allows her to bring different works together and create families and collections following recurring patterns and certain links or, on the contrary, certain fractures.

For this new exhibition, Silvia Bächli has included five large-scale drawings that push further an important series begun in 2006. In each of these impressive works is a succession of generally parallel lines drawn in gray or black with a wide variety of densities. Neither entirely abstract nor figurative, this motif acts as a kind of curtain. As is the case with much of her works, these lines may be interpreted in several ways; as strands of hair, roots, plant stalks, trickles of paint. In order to produce these drawings, the artist placed herself in the centre of each sheet of paper on the floor and made long brush strokes without breaking off or going over the lines again. Thus her whole body is engaged in the drawing and its resistance and limits determine the result. The role of the spectator is in the reconstitution of the original movements.

As well as this series, the artist is also exhibiting a series of new, small and medium format drawings in a wide range of greys or in colour. They show great diversity in technique, moving from fine, nervous strokes to broader, calmer lines.

Born in Switzerland in 1956, Silvia Bächli lives and works in both Paris and Basel. Last year she represented Switzerland at the Venice Biennale (The Swiss Pavilion, Giardini, June – November, 2009), where she exhibited the installation *das (to Inger Christensen)*, in homage to the late Danish writer, made up of 33 drawings and photographs as well as a series of the "table-showcases."

Her work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at major institutions, notably in 2006 at MAMCO in Geneva, in 2007 at the Centre Pompidou in Paris and at the Serralves Museum in Porto.

* Extracts from an interview with Silvia Bächli, « Silvia Bächli, Sous les traits » by Anaël Pigeat and J. Emil Sennewald in *Roven* N°3, March 2010.