

**Press release
January 2018**

**Jean-Frédéric Schnyder
Am Thunersee 1-38
January 13 to March 4, 2018
39 Great Jones Street, New York, NY 10012
Opening on Friday, January 12, 6 to 8 pm**

Eva Presenhuber, New York is pleased to present the sixth solo exhibition by Swiss artist Jean-Frédéric Schnyder.

Born in Basel in 1945, Schnyder spent his youth in Bern. From 1962-1965, he completed an apprenticeship as a photographer in Wengen. From 1973-1975 and from 1979-1982 Schnyder lived in the Engadin, then he settled down in Uttigen near Thun. Since 1996 he lives and works in Zug.

While his earlier works were influenced by both the Pop Art and Conceptual Art movements, the artist's path diverged radically from these artistic trends in the 1970s. It was with this departure that his work began to take on new and considerable significance. Schnyder was influenced by the artistic changes of the time and, conversely, was present on a stage that came to be central to the young generation of the late 60s and early 70s. In 1970-1971, after contributing to the legendary 'When Attitudes Become Form' exhibition at the Kunsthalle Bern in 1968, Schnyder made his first ventures into the field of painting.

Three years later Harald Szeemann also included him in 'Documenta 5' in Kassel. During this time Schnyder shifted from object-based art to painting. For the series 'Wanderung' (Hike) exhibited at the Swiss Pavilion at the 45th Venice Biennial in 1993, he hiked along the entire Swiss national highway from East to West and painted 119 vistas of the traffic, portraying Switzerland in a previously unseen manner. Schnyder knows how to challenge painting through a conceptual approach and with ironic distance. He deliberately undermines traditional positions with a tongue in cheek attitude.

At Eva Presenhuber's New York location, Schnyder presents the center piece of the exhibition in the main space of the gallery: 38 small-sized paintings from the 1995 cycle 'am Thunersee 1-38' (on Lake Thun 1-38). For this cycle the artist strapped his easel to his back and hiked day after day, painting motifs from Lake Thun area ('View into the Justus-Valley' such the mountain 'The Niessen') in the style of plein-air painting. Sometimes the mountain almost stands out; sometimes it's enveloped in clouds. It is the meteorological, atmospheric and energy conditions that change in each painting. With Schnyder we alternate between the presence and absence of the 'ideal' painterly moment. The act of painting itself is the only constant. This painting cycle has previously been shown in the exhibition 'Ferdinand Hodler & Jean-Frédéric Schnyder' at Kunsthhaus, Zurich [September 2014 to April 2015], curated by the artist Peter Fischli. "Schnyder's image cycle 'am Thunersee' ('on Lake Thun', 1995) is linked to Hodlers conceptually. Fischli focused on the creative processes of two characteristic representatives of Swiss art: one a celebrated and pivotal master of the transition to Modernism, the other an artist from the post-war generation who brought new ideas to bear following the end of a Modernism become classical. The landscape, studied and painted in the open air, plays a key role in both cases. The presentation emphasises the features common to both artists but also highlights the dissimilarities."¹

The exhibition expands in the entryway and on the lower exhibition level with paintings, sculptures and linocuts from the late 1970s to the late 1990s presenting a comprehensive view on the work of Schnyder. "Since 1970, Jean-Frédéric Schnyder has developed a holistic approach that considers any style – popular art, naturalism, realism, kitsch, or abstract art as an original form of expression. These concepts however, are not intellectual starting points, for they automatically entail a prior act of evaluation and signification. This does not worry Schnyder; the concepts interest him only in relation to the pictorial language they utilize – as collective forms of expression that describe the world. By nature, he attempts intuitively to unite all the truths of pictorial language, subdividing them, thereafter, as a 'catalog' of concepts.

**39 GREAT JONES STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10012
TEL: +1 212 931 0711
WWW.PRESENHUBER.COM**

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He does not quote these painterly forms of expression; he experiences them as genuine creative activity within himself, which he then exaggerates to reveal their absurdity. Schnyder denounces the meaninglessness of history when it is construed as the history of man, but, at the same time, exemplifies it in the creative ability of the individual. Each day, he transforms meaninglessness into meaning – an act of faith – with the discipline of a skeptic and the passion of a lover.”²

Schnyder participated in numerous solo exhibitions including Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich (1993, 1996, 1999, 2004 and 2010); The Swiss Institute, New York (2012), Kunstmuseum Basel / Museum für Gegenwartskunst Basel (2007); Centre Culturel Suisse Paris (2004); Ikon Gallery Birmingham England (2002); Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main (1993); Portikus, Frankfurt am Main (1993); Biennale di Venezia/Swiss Pavillon, Venice, Italy (1993). His work is represented in the following collections (selection):

FRAC - Franche- Comté, Besançon, Museum für Moderne Kunst (MMK), Frankfurt/Main, Kunstmuseum Basel, Basel, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel, Kunstmuseum Bern, Mamco – muse d’art moderne et contemporain, Geneva, Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich.

¹ Ferdinand Holdler / Jean-Frédéric Schnyder (exh.cat.) Kunsthau Zürich, Zurich 2014.

² Jean-Frédéric Schnyder: Paintings, (exh. cat.) ed. by Elsa Longhauser, The Galleries at Moore, Philadelphia, PA 1994. pp. 8-9.

For further information, please contact Christian Schmidt (c.schmidt@presenhuber.com) or Jill McLennon (j.mclennon@presenhuber.com) at the gallery.

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