

## press information

March 2009

**Monika Baer**

**in Ketten (in Chains)**

April 18 to May 23, 2009

Opening: Friday, April 17, 6 – 8 pm

Monika Baer's latest exhibition, titled "In Ketten" ("In Chains"), combines paintings from different series into a circuit along which her various motifs and pictorial strategies can be experienced in a broader context. The show features images of roads and paper money, spider webs, walls and holes, breasts and seams: Not only do the motifs vary, but the artist also makes use of a wide range of materials, techniques, and ways of painting. Rather than reflecting a change of style or a succession of different 'periods', the diversity of these elements is to be understood as a fundamental principle of Baer's artistic approach. While still in the making, the paintings already refer to one another, evolving through mutual attraction and rejection. Thus, the title "in Ketten" may be interpreted both as a chain of heterogeneous themes and visual constituents and the feeling of being captivated by, or caught in, every single painting - a feeling that, although eventually offering the opportunity to move on, initially presents an obstacle that needs to be overcome in artistic terms. The psychological and emotional space that opens up both within each piece of work and between the paintings cannot be separated from material aspects related to motif and technique. In this light, a road might just as readily be seen as the path of life as it could be considered an element of self-reflection that shows the path from one painting to the next. Most of the time, though, the depicted roads can only be recognized as the markings of a centerline whose individual strips could be the paintings themselves moving within the pictorial space. In some pieces, these paths are dynamic and free, while they are relocated and blocked in others.

Since her early years at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, Baer has avoided following specific traditions of painting. She seems, however, to have been influenced by the minimalist, conceptual, and performative approaches that formed the essential points of reference at the Academy at the time. The performative factor has found expression in one pole of her artistic approach that one might define as 'stage-like'. In these works – from the series of the "huts" and the so called "Mozart paintings" to the "hunter"- and "vampire" series –, props, sceneries, and masks appear as key starting points for entering into an unusual exploration of painting as a discipline of art that stages its possibilities. The other pole of Baer's work could be viewed, against a minimalist-conceptual background, as the very 'object' of painting, revealing itself, since her cut pictures of the late nineties if not earlier, in the seams of her breast paintings and,

especially in her recent web paintings, in the form of visible framework, carrier surface, and, sometimes, even mounting. Object and stage may well represent opposite poles, but there is an increasing interplay happening between them, which thematizes the object-like side of the stage and the stage-like side of the object. The individual themes develop in the area of tension in between. They may appear both literal and linked, trivial and thought-through at the same time. Some paintings seem almost emptied and meaningless, while others leave the impression of being loaded with collectively experienced, emotional, and psycho-sexual moments of meaning. On the one hand, the object may turn into a motif, as can be seen in the jeans-like seams of Bear's breast paintings; on the other hand, the motifs, such as the breasts, become objects – not only in a sexual sense (both as passive objects to be looked at or desired and as active 'subjects' that drip and squirt), but also in a literal sense, since they end up serving as a carrier surface for the paintings. Along these lines, her seemingly realistic bills, which seem almost within reach, can also be read as abstract surfaces that vanish into the pictorial space. The webs, in turn, are based on actual spider webs; here, the motif becomes virtually identical with the object of the painting, while the monochrome coloration ranging from pink to peach alludes to other levels of reference altogether. It is in this kind of exchange, the process of veiling and unveiling, that Monika Baer's artistic agenda becomes evident. Her paintings accentuate the ambivalence between perception and recognition, between the technique and production of a piece of work, and generally between the content, expression, and medial conditionality of painting in ways that make them appear paradoxical.

For further information, please contact Gertraud Presenhuber at Galerie Eva Presenhuber.

In parallel with this exhibition, Galerie Eva Presenhuber will be hosting a show by Amy Granat.

Opening hours:	Tuesday - Friday	12 noon - 6 pm
	Saturday	11 am - 5 pm

Upcoming exhibition at the gallery:	Valentin Carron
	Peter Fischli/David Weiss
	June 6 - July 31, 2009
	Opening: Saturday, June 6, 6 - 8 pm