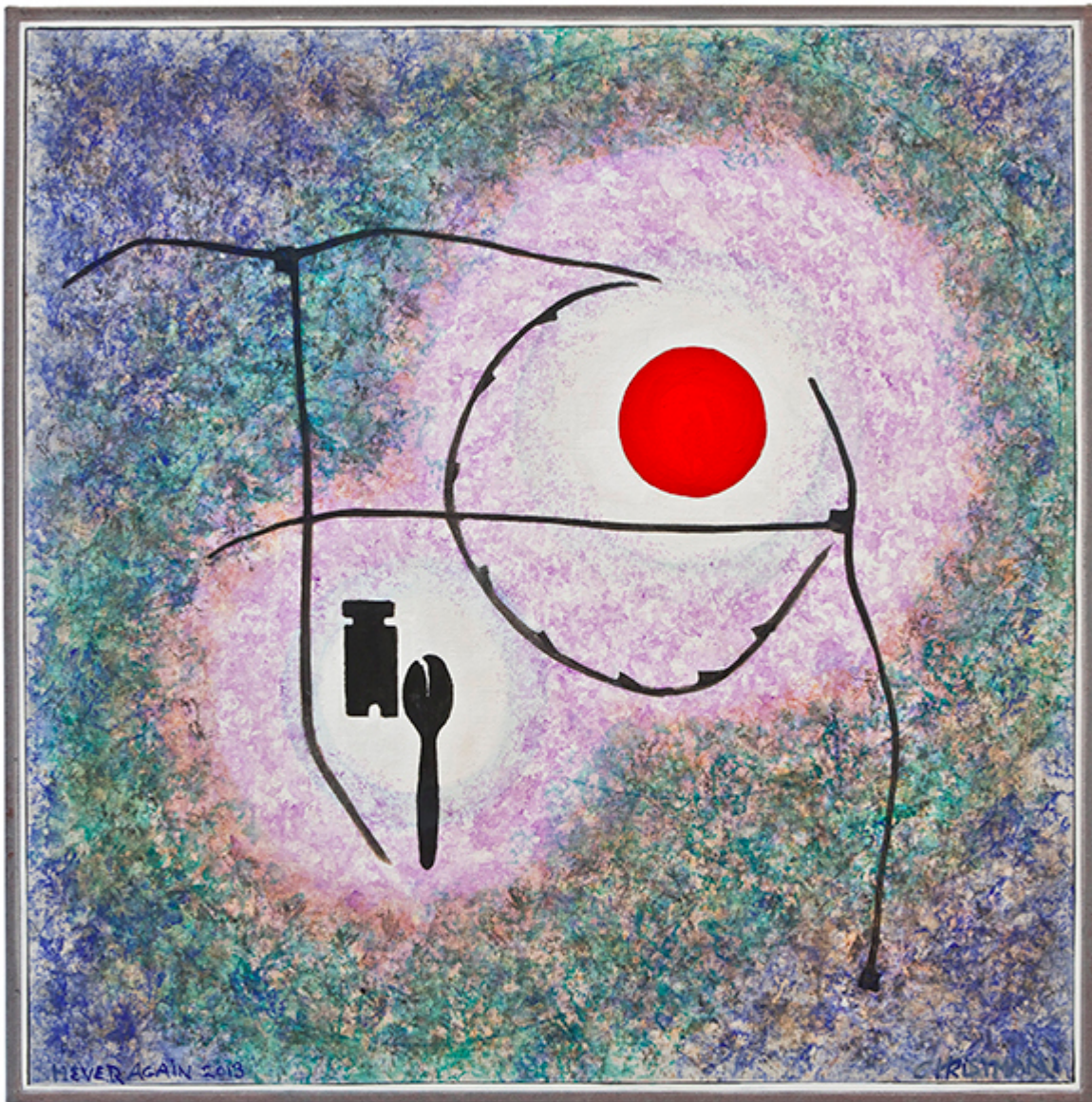


THE COMMERCIAL

GUNTER CHRISTMANN



opening Friday 07/08/15, 6-8pm

It is with great pleasure that The Commercial presents its third solo exhibition by Gunter Christmann (b. 1936, Berlin, d. 2013, Sydney). The exhibition comprises a group of late paintings alongside a group of small works on paper from 1975-77. The two bodies of work, created four decades apart, are linked by a common process: Christmann's idiosyncratic shuffle box or water tank technique, simple devices for the creation of composition in painting. In addition to providing a system that allowed the universe to determine the arrangement of objects for the artist to paint, the small shuffle boxes, proportioned the same as the intended painting, perfectly housed the humble items -- bottle tops, cable ties, leaves, etc. -- offered up by the streets around the artist's Darlinghurst home, urban refuse insignificant until incorporated into the body of the painting, its still life.

The pull of gravity dictated Christmann's technique involving the arrangement and rearrangement of small, street-scavenged things. This ground-consciousness developed out of the 'sprinkle' paintings of the late 1960s/early 1970s in which paint was dropped onto the canvas on the ground from standing height 'like rain', such as the wonderful *Over Orange* (c. 1969) and *Oktoberwald* (1973) currently on display at the Art Gallery of Western Australia and Art Gallery of New South Wales respectively as part of those institutions' permanent collections. Returning to his shuffle boxes in later years, as part of the general humility and self-sufficiency of Christmann's studio practice, the group of paintings in the forthcoming exhibition are characterized by their sponged grounds, optically similar in their blending of colour to the early sprinkle paintings though achieved through the compression of space between passive canvas and deliberate hand.

Gunter Christmann was an artist's artist. He made abstract and figurative paintings since the early 1960s soon after he moved to Australia. For thirty-eight years, he worked energetically and experimentally in his modest Sydney studio on the top floor of an apartment block in Darlinghurst opposite the National Art School. He lived there with his soulmate, Jenny Christmann (b. 1929, Düsseldorf, d. 2005, Sydney). Gunter - the artist, the Berliner, the bohemian - was a fixture of the surrounding streets and cafes and well-known to NAS students and the broader local community. A 50-year retrospective of his work, curated by Lesley Harding, was held at Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, in 2014. The exhibition was testament to Christmann's greatness as an artist and indicative of the extent, diversity and excellence of his life's work.

Christmann exhibited in key historic exhibitions including *The Field* at the National Gallery of Victoria (1968), the *XI Biennale of Sao Paolo* (1971) and the 1st and 4th Biennales of Sydney (1973 and 1982). He exhibited at Central Street, Coventry Gallery, Yuill | Crowley and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery all in Sydney throughout the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s

(roughly) respectively. He exhibited for thirty years continuously with Niagara Galleries in Melbourne until his death.

From the early 1970s, as an extension of or adjunct to painting, Christmann produced sound sculpture, which he named *audio-plastik*, as well as a number of notable photographic-based works in the form of analogue slide carousels. In more recent years, short digital videos incorporated a temporal dimension into his shuffle boxes and float tanks.

Christmann's work is in the major state and public collections in Australia including extensive holdings in the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra (over sixty works). International collections include the Berlinische Gallerie, Berlin, H.R.M. Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands' Collection and the British Museum, London.

An 80-page exhibition catalogue was published to accompany the Heide retrospective with essays by Simon Barney, Lesley Harding and Noela Yuill.



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