

Press release

Melli Ink: <<Cold Blood>>

March 26 – May 22, 2009

Opening hours:
Friday and Saturday 2pm – 6pm
And by appointment

Brain and heart take centre stage in Melli Ink's exhibition *Cold Blood*. Objects fashioned from glass, wood and textiles, and a series of drawings, find her exploring the mythical emblematic significance of these organs. She binds together allusions to mythology, medicine and art history to form a rich symbol system that questions the human condition. She picks up on the *vanitas* theme of earlier works. "Die apokalyptischen Reiter" (*The riders of the apocalypse*) found her exploring death, disease, hunger and war, while the object of her interest in "Savage Garden" was the beauty and ferocity of carnivorous plants. Now, though, we find her turning her attention to the fragility of the individual, to the conflict between body and soul and between reason and emotion.

Inspired by a scene in the DEFA film *The cold heart*, in which the poor charcoal burner Peter accepts to substitute his heart for a stone in exchange for power and privilege, the artist shows fifty glass hearts against a wooden panel. The Ancient Egyptians saw the heart as the seat of the soul: Ink's "Die Feder der Maat" (*Ma'at's feather*) presents a glass heart and a feather on a block of wood, a reference to the Egyptian belief that the goddess Ma'at would weigh the souls of the departed in the underworld by means of a feather. Another object by Ink, a heart fashioned from mirrored glass under a bell jar, looks like it has the makings of a modernistic sculpture.

If ancient cultures considered the soul as residing in the heart, the brain, in this era of neurobiology, is the embodiment and seat of the self. Melli Ink contrasts a glass brain with her work "She has a quilted brain", a none-too-serious series of quilted-textile brains portraying the conflict between emotion and intellect. Also alluding to the conflict between rationality and irrationality are intoxicatingly absurd quotes from the *Futuristic Manifesto* embroidered onto lace – the old-fashioned embroidery providing an ironic contrast to the slogans.

In a series of drawings calling to mind medical depictions of these organs, brain and heart are transformed into an elegant labyrinthine tissue of lines verging on abstraction. "Gamachonia", an over-sized glass squid, finds the artist once again resuming her interest in the tangled appendages of these natural forms of nature (previously encountered in her glass jellyfish) and thus establishing a retrogressive link between man and the animal kingdom.

Cold Blood is Melli Ink's third solo exhibition in Switzerland. Austrian by birth, she studied stage design at St. Martin's College of Art and Design, London, a city she worked in for more than ten years. She has been living and working in Zurich since 2004.

The exhibition features new sculptures, installations and drawings by Melli Ink (*1972)

www.melli-ink.com