

EINSPACH FINE ART & PHOTOGRAPHY

Heads

Ákos Birkás

Exhibition on view: 18 February - 18 March 2022

Ákos Birkás is known first and foremost by the public, up to the present day, for his "Heads" series, his abstract ovals painted as a programme from the mid-eighties up till the late nineties, comprising nearly two hundred pieces in all. Not only the entirety of the painter's oeuvre, but even a large portion of the "Heads" series is practically unknown in Hungary. However, this is not surprising since, from 1985, Birkás worked abroad with increasing frequency and for more extended periods. He last had a large-scale solo exhibition in 1994 in Budapest; this was followed by a presentation in Vienna in 1997, in which he summarised the developments in his painting until that point. His new pictures have been on view in the decade since German, Viennese and Parisian galleries. Thus, the local art scene has received Birkás's new pictures produced around the new millennium with not a small measure of surprise (moreover, incomprehension): these are easily painted, large-scale, realistic portraits, which might appear to be opposed to his earlier paintings, known at home.

That which might seem to be an unexpected turning point in the eyes of some is actually the fruit of Birkás's coherent artistic programme; it is an oeuvre that incessantly questions the nature, role and aims of painting (and the painter), and thus, does not remain static, but is in a constant state of flux, in motion. Birkás's pictures are the proceeds of self-analysis of art and the artist (but not merely documentary), reflecting upon painting. Within this, first and foremost the intellectual relationship to portrait-painting, and this relationship, this self-reflection embraces in a single arc Birkás's various periods and his artworks that might appear at first sight to be inconsistent or radically innovative, or even provocative.

Krisztina Szipőcs

Szipőcs, Krisztina. Ákos Birkás: Works 1975-2006. Budapest: Ludwig Museum - Contemporary art Museum, 2006