

Franz Ackermann

(Neumarkt St. Veit, Germany, 1963)

Upon winning a fellowship in 1991, Franz Ackermann chose to spend a period of time in Hong Kong, where he lived in a tiny hotel room. The artist then made a series of small works on paper, maps that he called “mental,” in order to emphasize their intimate and private scale. Almost like transpositions of views obtained under a microscope, each of these works on paper has a structure that can be traced back to that of a nerve cell, in this case organized around a nucleus that includes architectural details pertaining to the reality of the place. This process coincides with the transformation of the unknown into more familiar territory and into a gradual deployment of the artist’s imagination over the complex urban grid. Inspired by the personal need to move about and explore places he does not know, Ackermann has turned the practice of travel, and the related need to orient himself to places encountered for the first time, into fundamental elements of his artistic research. The personal nature and “portable” format of the maps have been expanded to proportions that include oil paintings and large-scale wall paintings. *Wall Painting*, 2008, is characterized by blue tones that, like a deep sea, welcome the eye and free the mind to wander and pursue multiple suggestions. The work, which follows the proportions of the wall on which it is painted, exceeds the architectural limitations and extends into the space, in the form of subtle lines that suggest new paths. It is the ideal companion to *Map of the World*, 2007. Constructed in the form of a small garden shed, this installation has the same proportions as the shed that the English playwright George Bernard Shaw installed by his house in Ayot St. Lawrence, England. Mounted on a pivot that allowed him to orient it so that he could capture the best light, Shaw used the shed as a place where he could write undisturbed. Named “London,” it allowed him to be home and elsewhere at the same time. Like the model that inspired it, Ackermann’s installation can similarly rotate, offering different panoramic views. On the interior walls, the very dense grid of graphite drawings and details painted in oil is the image of a possible map that contains the world, a metaphorical vision of creativity that breaks free and of the artist’s studio and, without boundaries, succeeds in embracing the world. (MB)