

# Camouflage I

Enrico Castellani, Isa Genzken, Imi Knoebel

curated by Helmut Friedel e Giovanni Iovane

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Opening May 30, 2008, 6.30 p.m.

The word "camouflage" comes of common use in Europe during WWI. It seems that its etymologic origin, dated from the '700, meant "to blow a gust of smoke at someone's face in order to disorientate him".

In England, it was Daily News that first used the term camouflage, on the 25th of May of 1917, to indicate the action of hiding something from the enemy. The word was immediately transferred from the military uses into daily life through the expression "eggs camouflaged in a scramble", or often to ironically denounce a bluff: "he is nothing but camouflage".

In the artistic context, the wish or the need to become 'smoky' or invisible has a quite curious but at the same time significant origin, in an expression used by Franz Marc in a letter he wrote from the battlefield to his wife (quoted in "Transformations: Camouflage and Land Art" from Helmut Friedel). In this letter, the artist expressed the need to build some "Kandinskys" in order to make invisible the trenches in which he and his soldiers were hidden.

Exactly 70 years later, before starting his series of "Camouflages", Andy Warhol asked the following to one of his assistants: "What can I do that is abstract, but not really abstract?" In other words, it seems that mimicry, in its most appropriate and fiercely assumption of camouflage, can offer a different point of view from that of the artistic abstract models of the '900 (and obviously contemporary), including those radical experiences such as monochrome, located between a farewell and a suspension in the inner definition of painting.

Enrico Castellani's works have been rigorously expressing over decades (and without mimicry) this suspended condition of painting as a "promise" of an autonomous and authentic space (further beyond the minimalist tautologies).

On the other hand, Isa Genzken did a series of monochrome paintings (untitled "Basic Research") and of concrete sculptures that strongly represented an efficient answer to Minimalist and to its phenomenological neutrality.

The works and installations of Imi Knoebel "destructure" decompose the idea of monochrome as a presentation of "primary structures".