

From COCA Newsletter April 2010:

Max Podstolski 'My Art Instinct'

7th – 25th April

Front Gallery

A self-avowed, latter-day 'primitivist' painter in the tradition of Paul Klee or the postwar CoBrA group's Karel Appel, Max Podstolski has been creating his playful, symbol-laden and totemic works for over thirty years. His current CoCA show, *My Art Instinct*, takes the inspiration for its name from the recent book by Denis Dutton, and follows Podstolski's last major CoCA exhibition *Internal Necessity is the Mother...* (2005). Whilst, at first glance, Podstolski's work may appear to be a charmingly childlike confluence of intuition and accident, closer inspection reveals to what extent his paintings are, at the same time, carefully judged, reflected on and composed. Indeed, if the finely attuned balance, in Podstolski's work, between exuberant gestures and deft, inventive detailing and finish, does not immediately convince the spectator of his sophisticated approach, one need only read the artist's own lucid accounts of his practice – in essays such as 'My Art Instinct' (2010). Here, it becomes apparent that, in seeking to find a context for his latest body of work (some pieces started in 2006), Podstolski's agile and endlessly curious intellect has ranged over a broad cultural territory. For example, whilst the title of Dutton's book has been appropriated for Podstolski's *The Art Instinct (Mine)* (2007-09), the artist's ruminations over Gordon Walters' response to Maori rock drawings, as reproduced in Francis Pound's book *The Invention of New Zealand* (2009), informs another work entitled *Subject Emerging from a Skein of Lines* (2010).

Even more prevalent than Dutton or Pound, however, is the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. In works like *Niche for a Dionysian* (2009) and *Apollo and Dionysus* (2010), Podstolski acknowledges his personal debt to the enormously influential thesis Nietzsche presented in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) – that coherent human experience involves a necessary counterpoise between the pre-conscious and chaotic (the Dionysian) and the conscious and rational (the Apollonian). In *My Art Instinct*, Podstolski engages head-on with this seeming-paradox – one that exists at the very heart of his work, and which finds expression in the way his paintings emerge out of strange simultaneity of chance and decision-making, intuition and reflection.

David Khan

David Khan completed an MA in Art History and Theory in 2007. Currently, he tutors in Art History and Theory at the University of Canterbury.

Exhibition catalogue

The 30-page exhibition catalogue includes a preface by Dr. Warren Feeney (COCA Director), an introduction by Max Podstolski, essays by David Khan and Dr. Beatriz Caballero Rodríguez (a lecturer at the University of Canterbury whose research interest is 20th century Spanish philosophy), and 14 painting images. It is available at \$20 from **COCA Gallery** or the **Observatory Art Room** (The Arts Centre of Christchurch) or by emailing:

primitivebird@slingshot.co.nz