

Anniversary

Completely uncontrived

Munich's Galerie Rieder celebrates its 30th birthday

By Freia Oliv

30 years for the sake of art and for Munich: that is Edith Rieder. She has done some marvellous things and also managed to keep her head above water in difficult times in her gallery in Munich's Maximilianstrasse. She plays down any mention of the shops below her and the posh address: that has nothing to do with art. Those who wish to deal with the collector, self-made woman and down-to-earth lady from Upper Bavaria had better know their stuff and not harbour any illusions of grandeur.

"It was an absolute racetrack at one stage here, people ran up and down stairs, from gallery to gallery." That is precisely the reason why she moved from Gauting to Munich in 1984, to the very place where the Galerie Günther Franke once made history. Now Rieder is combating the fact that the "wandering circus" of the art scene is starting to gravitate towards the Museum Mile with readings, campaigns or the Open Art, which she helped to initiate as chair of the association "Munich Galleries for Contemporary Art". "Competition is good for business" is one of her mottos. And the other one is "cooperative neighbourhood". When she speaks of the solidarity of the galleries in the Maximilianstrasse or the gossips in the shops that she visited even as a child with her grandfather, one gets the feeling that Munich is still a village at times.

Personal contact and personal exchange are the weapons of the trained saleswoman, who forms a duo with the art historian Stephanie Schnuerer. This means that they can prevail against the large auction houses, which not only represent young art but also the "kick of the gamble". The greatest competitor, however, is the internet, which makes everything accessible. But at least it means that "people have become more flexible and open as a result and are less inhibited when it comes to entering a gallery." What awaits them there is not fast fashion but instead durable art. Soulages is an example: in 1987 Rieder was the first gallery in Germany to show his "Peinture noire" (black painting), with which he had first become famous in France after 1945. Nowadays the artist is among the most important protagonists of abstract expressionism. Rieder visits Colette and Pierre Soulages in Paris once a year. She has had and still has similarly close connections to Rudolf Wachter, Herlinde Koelbel and Franz Gertsch, for example. Yet Rieder does not make a big thing of it. Only the fact that Emil Schumacher came to her for the opening of his show in 1998, in parallel with a retrospective in the Haus der Kunst, makes her quite proud.

As well as classical modernity and the Bauhaus protagonists, Rieder has also concentrated on Spanish art after 1945. And continues to show, as a counterpoint, the work of non-established artists. After all, promotion is one of her greatest interests. The Edith and Werner Rieder Foundation was created in 1999, with three goals: the promotion of art, for example by means of its award for German-language drama; youth projects; and the support of the needy. Which brings us back to that which is special about Galerie Rieder: emotional, personal commitment. Completely uncontrived.

Simon Raab designs the anniversary show at Galerie Rieder

Goethe, Michelangelo, Caravaggio: They are all there. But what on earth has happened to them? Crazy color lines show tousled faces, one with a pucker, another yellowed to a strange green. And Newton stretches one of his half-eaten apples towards us. Simon Raab **does not have enough reverence for the great men of history** for him to avoid bringing irony into play. But he certainly has enough respect to present them in their – literally – entire grandeur. The work shown by the American with European roots in Munich's Galerie Rieder positively jumps right out at you: it is composed of gaudily colorful reliefs on metal (2001-2011), which he first paints, then varnishes to a high gloss and finally batters, in part with a jackhammer on the reverse. **The result lies somewhere between John Chamberlain and Vincent Van Gogh.** "Parleau", through water, is what Raab calls this effect and one gets the feeling, particularly with the abstract pieces, of being able to sense the indescribable glistening of a lake in the sun. The **physicist and mechanical engineer** not only traces a phenomenon of light: "The confusion of reality has become an obsession to me," Raab explains. He dismantles reality and then builds a new one, which goes beyond every scope and enables one to **dive completely beneath the surface.**