Artworks & Documents in the Exhibition

In the gallery:

Northwest wall
Paul Klee, *Little World (Kleine Welt)*, 1918
Courtesy of The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago

Northeast wall
David Schutter, *Drawing Boards*, 2018
Courtesy of the artist

In the vitrines, north to south:

Vitrine 1
All book covers: works by Paul Klee

Top, from left to right
Affected Place, 1922
Hermitage, 1918
Intention, 1938
Picture Album, 1937
The Magic Garden, 1926
Insula Dulcamara, 1938

Bottom, from left to right
Once Emerged from the Gray of Night, 1918
Let Him Kiss Me with the Kisses of his Mouth, 1921
Ancient Harmony, 1925
Flowering, 1934
Ancient Sound, Abstract on Black, 1925
Uncomposed in Space, 1929
Analysis of Diverse Perversities, 1922
Old Man Counting, 1929

Vitrine 2
All book covers: works by Paul Klee
Top, from left to right
Highway and Byways, 1929
Mystical Ceramic, 1925
Twittering Machine, 1922
Plummets to the Wave, 1928
(unidentified)
The Limits of Intelligence, 1927

Bottom, from left to right
Tod und Feuer, 1940
Senecio, 1922
Beware of Red, 1937
Signs in Yellow, 1937

Vitrine 3

To the left
All book covers: Paul Klee, Angelus Novus, 1920

To the right
Book cover: R. H. Quaytman, Chapter 29, 2015

Vitrine 4

R. H. Quaytman

Vitrine 5
All book covers: Caspar David Friedrich, Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog, 1818

Southwest wall
Caspar David Friedrich, Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog, 1818
Reproduced on: Maurizio Pollini: Franz Schubert, Wanderer-Fantasie, 1974

Paul Klee, Twittering Machine, 1922
Reproduced on: Antal Dorati & Minneapolis Symphony: Gunther Schuller, Seven Studies on Themes by Paul Klee, 1961

In the lobby:

Zachary Cahill
Notes on Contemporary Works in the Exhibition

In the Gallery:

During a recent visit to the Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin, David Schutter noted the frequent occurrence of birch trees in the work of Caspar David Friedrich. (Trees and mountains form the
two-faced cornerstone of Friedrich’s hold on the romantic imagination.) After returning to his Chicago studio, Schutter began work on a series of drawings based on Friedrich’s birches executed on his own well-worn birch drawing board. As with any drawing the artist makes on these soft birch panels, faint impressions remained embossed on the board underneath. In between drawings, Schutter habitually brushes back the impressions with a wire brush, returning the wood to a fresh flatness for each new drawing. Drawing Boards consists of a pair of the artist’s birch drawing panels printed in the German woodcutting tradition – a diptych rendered in the birch tree’s distinctive black and white. The black half of Drawing Boards is legible to the eye, its surface texture still somewhat discernible from a distance. Its white counterpart, however, can only be grasped as a kind of anamorphic image. By craning our neck or cocking our head to see it, the white print’s impression yields only a momentary flash of its presence, rendering perception a thing forever problematized by memory.

In 2015, R.H. Quaytman exhibited a series of works at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art under the overarching title Chapter 29: חקק (Hebrew for “engrave”). While in Israel, Quaytman had spent considerable time looking at Paul Klee’s iconic Angelus Novus monotype, an artwork forever associated with its first owner, Walter Benjamin. (It is through Benjamin’s close friend Gershom Scholem that the work ended up in its current home, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.) Astoundingly, for a work so endlessly scrutinized, overinterpreted even, it seems that no one had ever paid much attention to the image Klee had originally printed his angel upon. It was Quaytman’s curiosity about what lay hidden underneath this tormented symbol of modern German-Jewish history that eventually led to a shocking discovery: Angelus Novus rests atop a nineteenth-century engraving of a popular Renaissance portrait of Martin Luther, himself a tragic protagonist in the longer history of German-Jewish relations.

In the Lobby:

USSA Postal Service is the latest installment in the unfolding saga of Zachary Cahill’s USSA, a Gesamtkunstwerk-styled socio-aesthetic utopia in the making. For this exhibition, Cahill transformed the lobby of the Neubauer Collegium into a fully functioning post office, offering postcards of the artist’s own romantically inflected making as well as prepaid postcards addressed to Fogo Island, the site of this project’s inception. The centerpiece of Cahill’s immersive installation, however, is a giant banner depicting a Rückenfigur – the archetypal figure seen from the back so familiar from Caspar David Friedrich’s arch-romantic imagery – striding towards the (disused) old Main Post Office Building in downtown Chicago, billed as the largest post office building in the world upon its completion in the 1920s. This work continues Cahill’s ongoing dialogue with the work of Friedrich, while simultaneously reanimating the old romantic notion of books as “thick letters to friends.”