

### CRITICS' PICKS

#### Berlin

#### Michael Buthe

GALERIE THOMAS FLOR  
Mehringdamm 34  
September 22–November 17

Upon entering Michael Buthe's current exhibition, visitors will be utterly drawn into the colors and forms in the large-scale canvases on view. *Ohne Titel (ST 010)*, 1989–93, for instance is a wild abstraction, executed through a variety of techniques: On the right edge, newsprint shows through and it is covered with a zigzag pattern drawn in charcoal; many different hues have been thrown onto the rest of the painting's facade; and in specific places, one can see where Buthe swiped the canvas with his fingers. In other works, the image is sprinkled with a myriad of small pencil marks. This fluctuation between expressivity and love of detail, as well as the inclusion of the frame in the space of the image, and the use of everyday materials such as silver paper, bits of wood, or eggshells (in the manner of an assemblage), run through this entire show, which presents ten different genres of work from the period shortly before Buthe's death in 1994.



Michael Buthe, *Triptych (R 048)*, 1992, oil, acrylic, enamel, wood, glass, metal, plaster, stone, and aluminum foil on wood. overall 27 1/2' x 10' x 3'.

Buthe, a four-time participant in Documenta, was not only an artist but also a poet, and he lived primarily in Cologne. In the 1970s and '80s, he was among the best-known figures of the German art world. Though today he is perhaps not as recognized, in the last few decades his works have been continuously exhibited in solo and group shows—most recently in "Abstraction and Empathy" at the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin in 2009 and in this year's Triennale in Paris. Near the end of the present small exhibition, visitors encounter *Triptych (R048)*, 1992, and here one can really get a sense of where a part of the ongoing fascination with this artist is rooted. Where his contemporary Anselm Kiefer dug deep into the gray, ash, and earth-colored thornbush of German history, Buthe went in the opposite direction—out into the world, into color, and into the living chaos of the present.

*Translated from German by Diana Reese.*

— Kito Nedo