

Perception- to perceive correctly – what is true of what we perceive...

Opening speech for the exhibition of the works of Peter Nowotny – Mobile Ornaments in the gallery “ArtAFFAIR” in Regensburg by Dr. Elke Marian Deubzer on the 12th of July, 2012

I want to welcome you to these wonderful gothic rooms which give the works of Peter Nowotny a great and fitting frame with their cloisters. I have known Peter Nowotny for a long time, more than 20 years, and had the pleasure to accompany his works and impact. We often talked about his works and what could be the deeper meaning behind them.

About the artist

Of course I would like to tell something about the personality of the artist and to his, for an educating artist, exceptionally unusual biography. But I won't. I want to keep it unknown. My words would only bring you to ideas. They would awake pictures and attitudes, open drawers, distort the view on the works themselves... distract and compromise your perception.

What can one perceive? What's the true picture?

Who I am

I myself am a psychologist – caution: you may close the first drawer immediately – I am not a psychotherapist. I work with designers and developers to make the link between man and machine more user-friendly and easier to operate. “Visual artists” only have the few dimensions made by god to give products and functions meaning and recognisability: size, form, brightness, texture, order in a room and, if parts move, furthermore the behavior in time and space. That's it. If you arrange everything “correctly”, the “right” pictures and behavioral programs are being activated in the mind of the user.

Perception and Psychology

The most work is being done by our eyes and what's behind them – I'd call it “Mind” because it's a lot more than our brain. This incredible interplay of mind, thought and concluding processes, moods and emotions, short, mid and long-term goals and our social identity. This “Mind” which was formed by definite socio-historical circumstances, being our home, our culture, our age we live in and our bio-socio-technological environment.



PETER NOWOTNY
MOVING ORNAMENTS

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Mind-mechanisms

It's like we see through the curtain of our knowledge, our emotions and goals and our affiliation and wishes on these things. We recognise, conclude and project. Those recognition, colouring and projecting processes are completely normal. Incentive is the necessity to self-orientate, -locate and to know what to do.

Perception or to perceive as "true"? What is true of that what I perceive?

Hard-edge and Deindividualisation

When I look at the works of Peter Nowotny I firstly see the sharp edges of the lines and the principle of working defined as "Hard Edge" like it was used by Ellsworth Kelly, Kenneth Noland, Frank Stella, Max Bill and Günther Fruhtrunk. Hard Edge is a countermovement to the abstract expressionism – ergo the opposite to the style of Willem de Kooning.

Hard Edge means anonymization of the language of painting, realized mechanically with the help of template, pencil, tapes and an exact way of painting. Painters of the Hard Edge movement reject a personal style of painting. The work is being depersonalized. Deindividualised. The focus of perception is being moved to structure and composition.

The thoughts of the observer shouldn't be occupied with the artist or their own memories and projections. That's why there is not a lot to link the own mind, wants and aspirations to. The focus of the observer is being put to the here and now – on the to be – to be present.



Icons

I see references to the Russian constructivism, to the Russian painting of icons and to Islamic ornamental art. Frontal depiction of persons, who look like icons and whose faces were already extinguished – Figures who already experienced depletion. ... The deindividualised is transferred into an abstraction, - into edges overhauled according to the principles of composition and become independent in signs, symbols and icons.

What was it mean to truly see something? Is there a true picture? What's the divine in the whole picture?

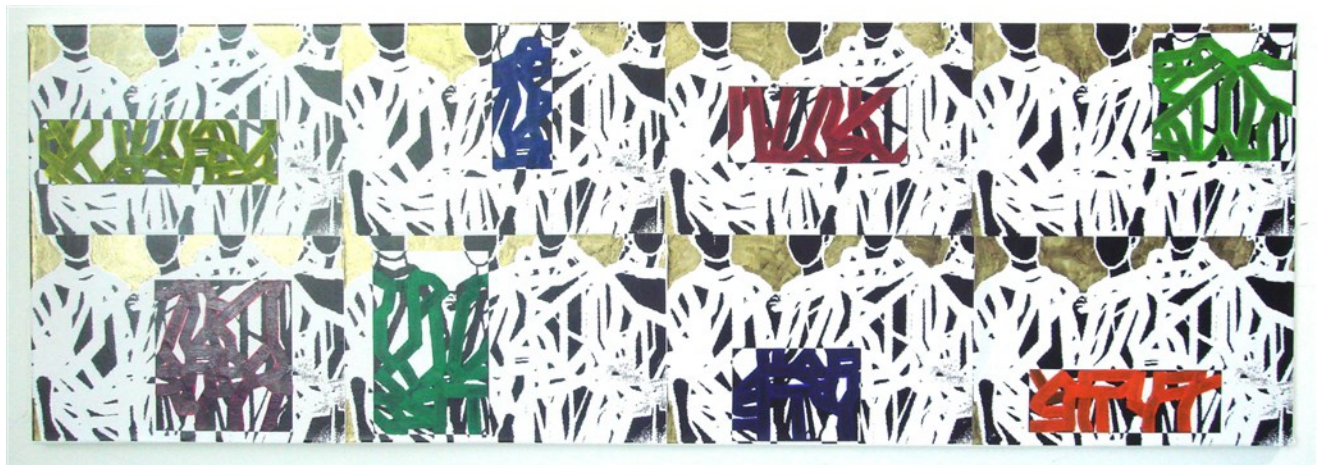
You shall not make for yourself an image

"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them"

So begin the Ten Commandments in the old testimony. There is nothing to make oneself an image of what is not imaginable. God is not imaginable. Mankind, animals, living creatures are not imaginable in their copious being. Therefore there is nothing to depict as it is not depictable.

Ban on images

There are bans on images in all monotheistic religions: in Zoroastrianism, in Judaism, in early Christianity, in parts of Assyrian Church and Orthodox Church, in Protestant Church of Calvin and Zwingli and in Islam. Even though a ban on images is not in the Holy Quran some Islamic schools of law interpret it so strictly that new trends of art developed: calligraphy and incredible ornamentation out of geometrical vegetal patterns. There you find neither depictions of god, nor depictions of prophets, men or animals because depictions are not compatible with the unity of god and the Creation as there is the risk of idolisation, the confusion of being and image, the hazard of considering the picture as true – not the present being.



Perception of Ornamentation

Ornaments guide the focus of attention completely different from images.

They make the mechanisms of the "Mind" perceivable:

The "Mind" examines the ornament, analysis the signs, symbols and their copies, mirror images, axis, sequences, dreams away on the search for the meaningful.

Ornaments challenge to find meaningful personalities and because they are nowhere to be found you return to the world of the ornament and to the present time.

Ornaments don't bring forth any starting points for our content-filled thought and mind processes. They don't trigger emotions nor a lifestyle; no mind-patterns for quick taxonomies, drawers or projections of our own "Mind" machine.

What do I see? What do I perceive? What do I think to be true?

Flood of Images in the Media

Today's world is dominated by a multimedia flood of images which are being burned in our conscience on the daily: styled, photo shopped, primed, composed, compromised, chosen to make us favourably inclined towards products, behaviours, wars and even the European Championship. Perfectly fitting symbols and signs trigger affiliations to lifestyle and groups, created by an industry of market research, advertisement and PR – masters of emotion-management which precisely know and use the mechanisms of social awareness, the need for orientation, identity and affiliation.

Super-Daddies and Grey hoppers

They create spaces for projections for target groups known today as super-daddies, tiger-ladies, latte macchiato families or super grannies; folks of respectable age who never stop learning; silverpreneurs and grey hoppers: men aged 55+ who still fancy sport, health, good looks and adrenaline kicks. You still didn't discover yourself among these groups? Maybe you are a scruppie then: sustainable and ecological, socially conscious and upwardly mobile or a "loha": lifestyle of health and sustainability.

LiL's – Lost in Labels

Media, fashion and brand aesthetics deliver subtle, precise and predicative symbols, signs and icons. "If you have the right label, you fit in!" even though labels like Boss, BMW or Bruno Banani are considered to be "not for everybody..." and promise absolute individuality. You will find them in thousand fold copies sticking on every body, giving a sense of identity and orientation, guiding and supporting ... using the Mind-mechanisms ... we are all LiL's: "Lost in Labels" - being in good hands and feeling protected, being seen and assessable, seduced and used by the symbols, signs and icons we wear on our body.

Mobile Ornaments

Through the quantity of wearers those signs are being duplicated in the social space, are being sequenced and mirrored so that out of the aerial perspective huge super ornaments can be made out: moving, colourful, swirling, streaming, circling, aesthetical ornaments- Mobile Ornaments.

Text: Dr. Elke Maria Deubzer Pictures: Peter Nowotny – Mobile Ornaments