

Jaromir Novotny – Echo Chamber

2.12.2016 – 21.1.2017

Interview

(for Irene Schubiger – please scroll down)

You recently said in an interview: "If I have to introduce myself briefly, I call myself a painter". This sounds very convincing and also confusing, when standing in front of one of your works. Because the materials you use are not obviously associated with painting, for example synthetic organza as canvas, wood, paper, almost no color and brush marks. When we are looking at the long history of painting what is your position, what are your thoughts about this medium today?

JN: I am saying this just to start a conversation, if people do not know at all what I am doing. Second reason is, that I really came from a field of painting and even if now the works look more like objects, there is still a paint on a support on a frame. Till now, I have considered all those exposed stretchers, objects put behind the screen etc. to be just another means of painting. A visual element you need to add there but not necessarily with a brush and paint.

You not only use unusual materials but also techniques like sewing, sticking or cutting. Amongst other this gives your paintings a very haptic, tridimensional impact. Is this also a way to undermine the traditional perception of what we associate with painting?

JN: No, I do not want to undermine anything. Maybe, I do not even think it can be a way, because so many artists did textile and/or haptic works as paintings already. It is already a "position". If I should name it, I am not pushing the limits here, I am not making a new statement, but rather working within an area conquered (but not worked on finely enough maybe) by others.

As a viewer you often stay at the same time in front of an illusory space - due to the way you use the semitransparent organza - and vis-à-vis real holes cut out of the canvas. I am wondering what this overlapping of illusionism and reality means to you?

JN: It means that both illusion and reality create a new reality. Sometimes things can play as illusions, but everything just is existing. On the other hand, you can check every part of the work with your eyes (and hands), but it still keeps you as if uninformed. You can zoom as much as you want, but later standing in front of it, you do not know again. I like this tension. But it is not based on contradictions, I do not stage it. I do not want to trick a viewer. It just comes from a work made in a quite simple way.

You said that now you are dealing more with the screen itself, you cut more holes, you cut and sew more but at the same time you work with the human scale as a reference. On one hand it's art about art or better painting about painting. But on the other hand you introduce the human being as a reference point. What does this mean for the group of work you will show in Zurich?

JN: I would not say, that it is either this or that. Sewing refers to painting, or better drawing, because you create lines. But it also refers to a common human activity. You can imagine the hands working, the human (body) scale is there.

If a painting is a body (and I imagine this sometimes), then holes and sewing can not (only) be formal compositional elements. Art about art is not in contradiction with including a human (body) as a reference. Art is always human.

Interview: Elisabeth Gerber

Irene Schubiger

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Some time ago Irene Schubiger showed me a series of black-and-white postcards and photographs of Canton Glarus dating from the 1950s. It was a look back at bygone days, at a childhood and youth when the slightly quirky or non-conformist still had a place in life. If one let one's gaze roam, instead of focussing on the scenes and interiors, a strangely ambivalent mood unfurled. Just like we repeatedly experience at an exhibition of works by Irene Schubiger.

Irene Schubiger's works thrive on a conscious-unconscious dialogue with the past that has sensitised her view of the present, of society today. Often it is the materials - dyed silicone, epoxy resin, plastic - that appeal directly to us due to their haptic quality and the contradictory feelings they elicit. But it is also the simple objects she develops out of basic geometrical forms that somehow recall household items or something equally familiar. Although they seem alienated in scale, form or colour, they remain linked with everyday reality by association. It is this ambiguity that makes her formalised idiom immediately narrative, albeit it in an unsettling, sometimes refreshing and often surprising way.

In the works in the current exhibition, Irene Schubiger forges ahead with her research to date. The minimalist-cubist shapes, arranged in a kind of multi-storey storage rack, and the ready-made-like encounter of a bucket with a neon tube, bring the art immanent aspects clearly to the fore. The idea of the series of objects, and above all the idea which the rack transports of the archive as an accessible storage place for knowledge, expands the spectrum of the past as a storehouse for the creative process. Both ideas form a complex link between the memories inscribed in the individual and collective treasury of experience and a multifaceted handling of more recent art and its history.

Elisabeth Gerber