

Figurativeness and abstraction – explicit and explicitly not shown? Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlung im Glaspalast Augsburg



Abbildung 1: Markus
Selg: *Abstieg (Olymp)*
2004

How the yearly exhibitions in Bavaria's capital Munich show, a rigidly drawn concept of contemporary art is obviously not even within a comparably closed region like Bavaria possible. Likewise, exhibition's of the BBK show foremost individual difference, from indifference to art history, traditions and concepts along simple adaptations up to almost delicate allusions from artworks to art as lively concept. The slogan „Malerei ist immer abstrakt“ - „Painting is always abstract“ - has to be suspicious to give a „no comment“ - label to a hidden strategy of selection without aesthetic idea. The contemporary art collection shown at the Bayerische Gemäldesammlung im Glaspalast Augsburg, may have been created following this line, with choosing the correctly queued Bavarian artist as its first criteria. Thus, the new exhibition of the Bayerische

Gemäldesammlungen shows nearly (ausschließlich) bavarians: Katja Barinsky, Katharina Daxenberger, Stephan Deckert, Hansjoeg Dobliar etc. - eight of them female, what seems nice service, but ends with the press release photo collection, that prefers a quite horrible Collage of Markus Selg and an oil painting done by Thomas Scheibitz.

The „Thermosublimationsdruck auf Polyestergewebe“ by Selg shows bodyparts of a person in baroque clothes, a hand in a pointing to gesture, the hair built out of the dark or shiny clouds of a pathetic background of heaven and stairs. The „stairway to heaven“ is satirically commented with very little legs walking the staircase upside down and a greasely painted red nose with some more costume stuff in the mouth. Thus, the figure is grotesque – the title „Abstieg (Olymp)“ in its second part strange. Will the picture show us, that contemporary painting with its overloaded history of representation has to leave the idea of ideality (in form, idea, handicraft, concept) independent of circumstances? The curator prefers to see a delimitation of differences between abstraction and figurative art. Even figurative art was always abstract, the artists showing some abstract idea – we can redraw this in the quite „conceptual“ collage of Selg. And abstract art was always figurative – in the sense, that material, styles or traditions are shown. These aspects too are given in Selg's horrible thing. But nevertheless. In comparison to conceptual art in the stricter sense, Selg just makes a joke. His printing is just the worse version of

seemingly copying of old master's tradition, and keeps strict within this. Thus, the idea, contemporary art was always handicapped by tradition is abated by the kind of technique – a printing – that give the damm to the way tradition is handled – thus, copied for example in modern media and just shuffled together. And even if Selg's accusation was more absolute, his art is not although it is allowed to – just thing about the establishment of conceptual art in the 70ties of the 20th century, that had sometimes given up the use of something visual completely. But Selg's is a pretty example for visual narration – making statemnets thorough pictures. The style is figurative, and a content is nearly illustrated. Abstraction is far away from it. To intermingle the concepts of content and abstraction is thus undermined by the very first picture of the exhibition, presented on the invatation card.

Indeed, a lot of the chosen artists narrate in different figurative ways, using known or established aspects of art or staging, the partiality of the picturesque room as a strategy to hide – like Katharina Daxenberger, who diffuses in this way the narrative contents of her figurative art. The just sketched stories are open for interpretation, better or worse, and open to give the mal y pense to the one who thinks about it: Not really perspectively given feet seem lifted – but why? Is the person – child ? - itself lifted? Dead? We are invited to involve into bad fantasies nobody very special is to blame for.

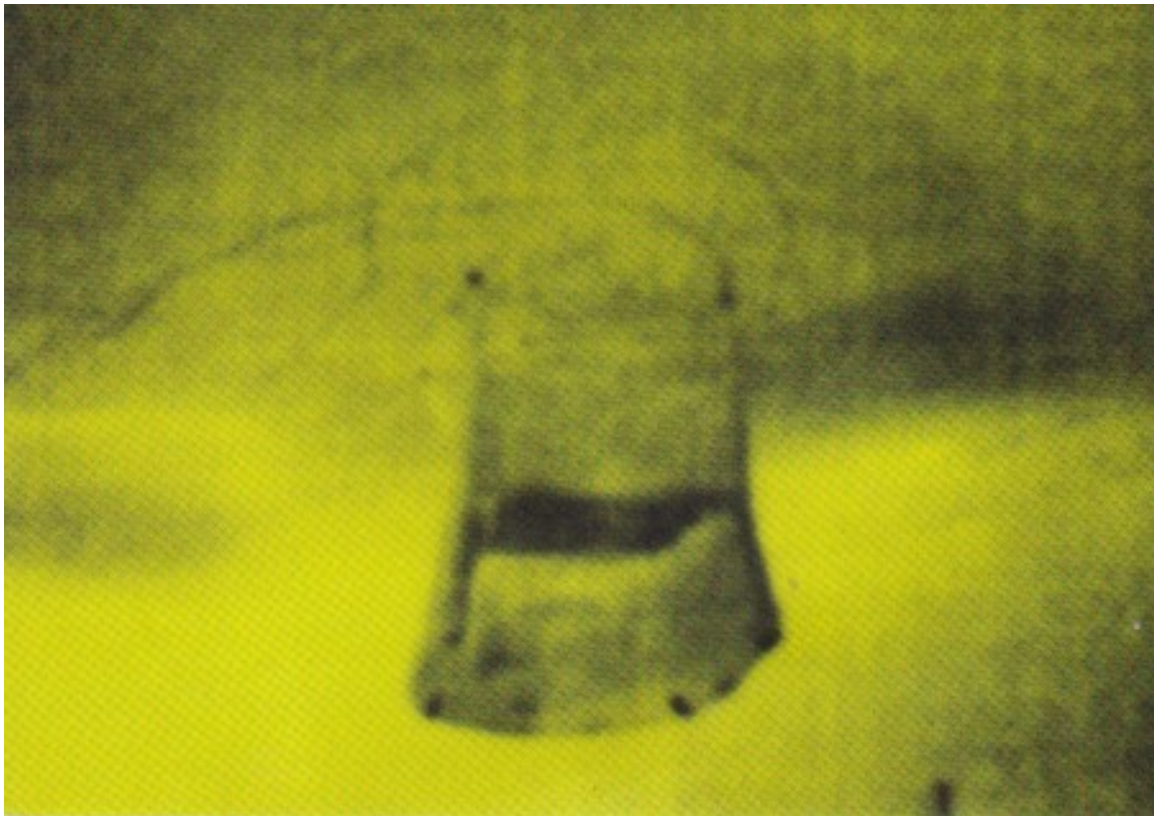
Daxenberger's pictures use the art stage perhaps more convincing than Selg, who refers to tradition but himself evades it. But the reminder that our knowledge is always partial and dependent seems perhaps less necessary than the psychological subject itself. Again, the art works are not abstract enough – so to say – but cares in foreign regions without to be really needed – for showing something at the limits of things we can in social contextes talk about.



Abbildung 2: K. Daxenberger, "Beine"

Thus, although always nice to see regional art presented instead forgotten, the emphasize on figurativeness cannot really convince and does not fulfill the promise of a delimitation into abstraction. But who cares. Who really demands such a handy sentence for all? As long as Bavaria doesn't stop to know contemporary art at all, we'll have to stop bitching some day. And anyway - the real conceptual exhibitions in contemporary art are done by the Staatsgalerie's neighbour, the H2 – center for contemporary art (Zentrum für Gegenwartskunst) – as the currently running exhibition „Räume der Stille“ („Silent Spaces“) shows. This will be bitched and

discussed in some hours :) Just one hint now: In „Räume der Stille“ - although the title doesn't allude it – we have art works that are *more* in any sense of the word: more frolic aspects, more formal aspects, more abstraction, more figurativeness, more repeat, more repsectlessness a.s.o. Perhaps look at this exhibition immediately:



Find information about „Räume der Stille“ along this link: <http://www.arts-on.com/pr/past.php?id=1251>

U. Ritter