



Hans Stalder
«A Period of Transition»
27.4. – 1.6.2013

The exhibition «A Period of Transition» displays paintings by Hans Stalder, comprising works with the artist's most relevant subjects: flowers, birds and portraits. Consistently pursuing his characteristic repertoire of images Stalder once again proves to be a painter working in series which reflect the increasing reduction of the original scene throughout the painting process. Aiming at an appropriate manner of painting for the traditional medium of oil on canvas Stalder applies the colours in form of a thin paint, having the subject appear nearly completely two-dimensional. Thus the artist intends to mirror the image surfaces of modern media age with their rather artificial colourfulness. Convincingly, Stalder explores the possibilities of representational painting after Andy Warhol.

Within his work Stalder uses photographic references from the print media and the digital world while also employing a private collection of photographs taken by himself. In doing so he reacts to current world affairs as geopolitical or historical events. Nevertheless, he also picks up on trivial news from the popular papers. Paintings such as «Landscape», «Zappa» and «Amy» are rooted in the artist's biography as they engage with movies and musicians from the 1970s and later decades, that have been of personal interest and influence to Hans Stalder. The green surface with the depiction of a red neon tube alludes to one of the CD covers once published by the US-American singer Frank Zappa and his band. At this point Stalder not only reveals to have a great love for this band, but also allows us inspection into the fact that he lets himself be inspired by a range of musicians from his youth, serving as concrete stimulation for his pictures.

Furthermore, the artist continually creates new variations of his self-portraits. Following the nuclear catastrophe at the Fukushima nuclear power plant Stalder designed the self-portrait with a mask as well as additional flower paintings of the pansies. A crucial feature of the portraits and the «Pensées» is their strong reduction and stylization to a few, flat arrangements of forms: As a figure of public life, with an icon-like status, Amy Winehouse can still be identified, whereas the flowers already appear as a kind of code. By neglecting all sense of depth in his compositions and emphasizing the picture surface instead, Stalder all the more exposes the subject matter of his images to the viewer. Consequently, everyday motifs we do not fully perceive any longer strike our awareness once again.

It is always images that lead Stalder to further images finding expression in his paintings. The photographs he chooses are transformed into something new under his hands. Committing himself to the painting process, the original reference becomes subject to the artist's personal way of perception, thus are loaded with new connotations. However, Stalder never plans his paintings in advance but opens up to the unpredictable. With the painting «Landscape» Stalder refers to the Japanese director «Beat» Takeshi Kitano and his film «Kikujiro no natsu», which deals with a man and a child fighting against all possible forms of trouble while travelling across the country. Both «Landscape» and «Capricho» stick out due to a different painting technique. These are the only works in the exhibition showing a painterly treatment effecting blurred colour fields, so far quite unusual for Stalder's oeuvre.

Janne Noll