

# JACKY STRENZ

*Galerie*

JAGODA BEDNARSKY  
LAURA SCHAWELKA  
GIOVANNI SORTINO

July 13 – August 31, 2013

## Jagoda Bednarsky

Photography and painting coalesce as fluently as oil and water – none at all, that is. Since first attempts to unify both dimensions of reality at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century most endeavours have failed due to the incompatibility between the manual surface on one hand and the chemically, resp. digitally created one on the other. Any visual approximation makes their contraction still more salient.

Instead of continuing to pursue the unification of different aggregate states, Bednarsky adds additional voices until cacophony turns into a unified variety.

Velvet, hardly nuanced planes of indeterminate depth are activated by unruly gesture. Transparent and opaque areas of glacial and fiery temperatures encompass and overlap pictures of yoga-postures, whose black and white surroundings create a buffer zone against charging colours.

The asanas' symmetry and explicitly vertical direction is reinforced by superimposed grids, along with the upside-down-turn of the bodies, having one athlete jump against the ceiling while another one is dangling downward like a beefy bat.

The variety of the sometimes almost sculptural structures along with their underlying motivity, ranging from steady strokes to sweeping hatchings and electrified twitches, remains consolidated by one dominating figure.

But more important than affiliating the latter to some floor plan, garment or marine creature is the decontextualizing of the elements which makes it possible to conceive representational forms as autonomous shapes.

The compilation of the individual paintings corresponds to the concept of a curated collection, meaning a gathering of independent constituents entering in different relationships.

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Laura Schawelka

In order to depict himself on one and the same canvas as the King of Spain, Velázquez had the royal couple appear in a mirror, thereby rendering them considerably smaller than his own frame in the foreground. Laura Schawelka applies this strategy the other way round but to a similar effect by photographing the reflection of her face on the picture of a film star in a shop window.

Using the example of the presentation of consumer goods through photography, Schawelka deals with the art of seduction - so essential for efficient advertising - and with its failure.

The poorly masked symbolism of sexual reproduction, which determines the window dressing, as well as the celebration of the senses heralded by ads for cosmetics and sweets, bear witness to the money spinning capacity of erotic signals.

The artist leaves no doubt that the succeeding arrangements, featuring semi-luxury foods, lack the cogency of successful fiction. Sundaes and cocktails evoke features of 1960ies flagships like the milk bar and the private swimming pool, without unifying these separate attribute in favour of a coherent atmosphere.

Ingredients and decoration remain sterile within a pathetic setting. This difference between irresistible and dispensable, which is discerned due to our in-depth observation usually granted to art works only, remains subconscious when being confronted with commercials in daily life - what makes it all the more potent. The faulty presentation of budget products increases the desire for magnificent scenarios, thus setting the stage for premium promotion.

Having emphasised the failure of these attempts to conjure up the feel of cocktail-parties or organic farming, the following advert of a translucent vase does the trick by applying the tried and tested practice of highlighting through disappearing: the object in question almost vanishes behind the vivid shapes of a bunch of flowers and the bright paleness of its environment, this way appearing all the more alluring.

The similarity of all those articles consists in their ability to increase the quality of living without being actually necessary. To make this - economically detrimental - factor fall into oblivion is the main mission of a whole industry dedicated to the 'art of the display'.

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## Giovanni Sortino

Like panes of glass superimposed upon each other, Giovanni Sortino's paintings consist of various layers, partly opening up to those underlying them. Looking at these palimpsests raises our awareness for subtle stimuli, for paying attention to deeper levels requires us to direct our gaze past the markings in the foreground on to hazy zones that seem to coalesce and dissolve rhythmically.

Colour, mode and number of these layers are determined by recollections of the artist's friends. In order to visualise the fact that these 'effigies in rear-view mirror' are generally based on conceptions rooted in the past, Sortino unveils their genesis by means of subsequent smoothing and roughening the image's surface. The result is a glance into its history – just as thinking of a person concerns their former rather than their present existence.

Undoing precise shapes and clear colours lends an ethereal air to what has been concrete – a visual analogy of remembered images becoming blurry with the passing of time.

This removal of the temporarily tangible in favour of a kind of afterimage transforms likeness into equivalents, paralleling their subject in a rather psychological than visible manner. Hence the reduction of ostensible detail brings the subject's less conspicuous aspects to the fore. Tension and calm, concentration and absence of mind, intro- and extroversion, tightness and openness, volatility and consistency, along with optical weights and temperatures evoke beings behind their appearance – just along the lines of Klee's wish to 'work like nature, instead of just looking like it'.

Text: Charlotte Lindenberg