

but because *The Unknown Masterpiece* persistently points out the fact that the ultimate reason for painting lies beyond the practice of painting itself. In this sense, the further course of the story represents a continual postponement of this ultimate reason, in so far as to how it should be realized. The protagonists seek the perfection of painting as an act of deciding. This process of bringing about an artistic decision amounts in essence to the constitution of the painter as subject. As long as the subject remains divided (Frenhofer's critical-theoretical skepticism), the act of bringing about the heroic pictorial decision—the decisive brush stroke—will elude him.

But the story also addresses the relativization of representation, the mimetic. Above all, however, it speaks to the imperative of the in-between, the suspension of the figurative problem of the enveloping surface—the incarnate—the meshwork of physical surface and depth, the dialectic between appearance and disappearance, front and back, which are justified in the active, oscillating coloration itself. The painting would therefore already exist in the interplay of surface and depth alone. It is a hyperphysics of layers and vibrations. The physical appearance, but also the thoughts, act through this. The painting (canvas, fabric), therefore, no more represents a surface than do the color, the skin, or the “foliate” principle of the visible, which Balzac suggests here. Painting either mocks us, in light of a surface that is not a surface, or we kill it. Some of this is reflected in Frenhofer's dilemma itself: between ontological mockery and self-sacrifice.

Text in the publication on gelatin's contribution:

Tex Rubinowitz
The Unknown Masterpiece

When I woke up the other day, I reached my new state of aggregation hanging on to only the two words “There is.” No picture attached. What is there? All kinds of things, beginnings, claims, attempts, rice, all of which are premised on THERE IS. If there was no is, nothing could come from it. Before it exists, however, there is always the lingering question, what am I actually doing here, is it worth it, who got me all dressed up with nowhere to go, or am I supposed to meet someone, so that he, in turn, can meet me? You can also build nothing on THERE IS, because, of course, nothing exists that's not at least SOMETHING. There's nothing to eat today. OK, I will simply go to bed hungry, and have bad dreams, and tell my therapist about my awful dreams tomorrow, and he will diagnose me with a THERE IS trauma, an anxiety of beginning. A trauma is, at least, not nothing. You can build something on traumas. But now that I've already woken up with THERE IS, there is no point in going to the therapist, because I know what he'll tell me anyway. I will not talk to him, so he will not have to listen to me either. I don't even know the new day yet. I guess that it is there, but can I be sure? Maybe I already died before I woke up, so forget about everything else if the answer to the question of what THERE IS is simply the entire rest of my life, which is dependent on its beginning. In the beyond, there is no beginning and no end, no answers, because there are no questions. God gives the nuts, he does not crack them. But that's only true for us down here who have woken up this morning, be it as a giant insect or with a half-begun sentence on dry lips. So, what is there?

There is THE POSSIBILITY. And the possibility is not one, they are many. They stand right before us, like soldiers, it's just that we can't see them. Basically, we don't see a single one, but we don't have to, because they see US.

Even if we pretend that we have free will, cosmologically speaking that's not entirely true, we don't even exist, we are a lipogram (writing in which a particular letter or group of letters is avoided) in a bowl of gelatin, something flawed in the aggregate state of the wobble.

Maybe we'll wake up one day and be not just one missing letter, but four missing letters in four bowls of animal protein from the connective tissue of some animals, perhaps domestic rabbits.

And now the four of you will decide what THERE IS. And that which is decided by these four flaws will be even harder to define, but the tough decisions they will nonetheless reach we will call *The Unknown Masterpiece*.

But that is never realized, or, it has not been realized so far, and this point between not yet realized and realized, between dream and death, between waking and THERE IS, that is called GELATIN.

Curated by N.O. Madsky

KAYA V (Kerstin Brätsch & Debo Eilers)
Display by N.O. Madsky
September–November 2015
Location Eschenbachgasse
(ill. p. 674)

Text
N.O. Madsky, Mousse Magazine, September 2015

He did not know anymore how long he had wandered the city. Endless periods of time seemed to have passed since he had set out on his quest. He could no longer say with certainty how long he had been on his way—time, it seemed, played no role in his mind now. Was it hours, days, weeks, even months or had he been on his search since the very beginning of his existence?

It was almost impossible for him to summon up clear memories of the beginning of his quest. He had long been aware of the fact that he was searching for something—a part of his identity.

Ever since his earliest childhood days, it had always felt this way, it was as if he had been locked out of an area in his mind and feelings, which was now out of reach and inaccessible.

He prowled the shady, bleak streets of this morbid city, its memory, and the abyss of its decline and decadence.

With its classical architecture from times of past grandeur, monuments to heroic deeds of old odor of great history, and a touch of illumination ... that ostensive order and righteousness, those achievements of a culture continually losing its way and disintegrating, one that was only cultivated for its own sake and to increase the population.

In the past he had, at times, still enjoyed the colorful hustle and bustle on squares filled with the imagery and sounds of modern industrial society, the distractions of dark backstreets and yards where money could buy just about any hedonistic desire. Now, he had only contempt for all of this. Contempt for all these sensory impressions, temptations, and feelings that lured him away from his quest, that wanted to hold him captive in the unbearable pettiness of his existence.

He had to flee the city and its residents. Both were utterly lost in endlessly repetitive trivia. He wanted to leave behind him the sardonically grinning grimaces of people and buildings, this masquerade of life that really wasn't one at all.

Morbidly obsessive, he kept on wandering feverishly down main and side roads, roaming around parks and stumbling through an endless sprawl of housing developments.

When he found it, he was hardly more than a shadow.

The place looked to him as if it had always been there, as if it existed outside of any perception of time and space. A temple of infinite wisdom, filled with ancient, forgotten knowledge and hidden secrets.

It spread out before him like a wound in the continuum of the known universe, like a rift in the reality known to him.

Well aware that his ceaseless quest was now drawing to a close, he stood at the threshold and felt a sense of absolute triumph.

The first thing he became aware of was a sound wafting towards him from out of the twilight, an incessant throbbing, hammering, and seething that seemed to come from far far away. He had to wait a long time for his eyes to adjust to the twilight and could make out the first shadowy outlines. It appeared this space was filled with life, with a scarcely fathomable dynamics of millennia-old congealment and constant movement, and as he was trying to grasp something tangible, an air of the sacred flowed around him like an ethereal mist rising from an opened pharaoh's burial chamber.

He felt dizzy.

He hesitated—knowing immediately that every step...

And then he crossed the threshold.

He entered the room like an acolyte of long-forgotten cults, slowly, keenly aware of the movements of his muscles, in the manner of a prelude to a ritual that...

The space



KAYA (Kerstin Brätsch & Debo Eilers)
Stone Call is for Bodybag
PLUMP PUCKER, 2015
metal, vinyl rope, oil on mylar, vinyl,
grommets, epoxy, plexiglass cans, urethane
390×190×40 cm

Elongated, sacred

Step over the threshold

Like Charon's journey across the Styx into realms of isolation that spanned eons, he left the world of the mundane, pushing onward into the sphere outside of direct perception, exploring mysteries that most people would forever be unable to uncover.

He was welcomed by machine-like silhouettes of an incomprehensible mechanics of permanent breathing cycles, a mesh of unreal colors, incomprehensible lines, cylinders, pendulums, tubes, and bionic incubus apparatuses.

He immersed himself in a pulsating life of recurrent circulation.

Everything was filled with vapors of decay and cadaverous motion, which swung back and forth like a sword of Damocles in a hypnotic pendulum movement.

Infinitely slow, like a marionette, he felt his way forward, not of his own accord, but going along, as it were, with the primal force of the pulsating cosmos that manifested itself around him.

It was as if he were part of an endless machine that was invariably drawing vital energy, deadening it, and delivering new life, filling all his senses, aligning his movements with the marching step of a shadowy procession that was accompanied by humming priests with strangely shaped tiaras on their heads. In the course of his initiation, they would introduce him to long forgotten mysteries and terrifying truths, willing to convey to him an understanding of wisdom as yet incomprehensible and intangible to him.

Universes of colors and shapes opened up around him, rushing towards him, burning themselves into his mind, and fully engulfing it.

With every step, he felt his own existence dissolve, his sleep of death end. He knew that each step meant the passing of his old, petty life.

While around him priests mumbled a beguiling sing-song chant, shadowy beings mysteriously whirred around his head, hovered above and watched him furtively, he could make out in the twilight reliefs on the walls—the signs of an older, greater, but infinitely alien wisdom that seemed impossible for him to decipher. Without being able to fully grasp them, he instinctively sensed that these signs, like the writing on the wall, heralded with fanfares the downfall of all traditional order and knowledge, screaming out into the cosmos the end of all culture known to him.

Soon he could no longer distinguish between himself and the outside, the bubbling and seething around him, he could feel how every further step meant a kind of dissolution. While unreal faces stared at him, tubes reached for him like tentacles, alien colors and signs flowed through him, permeating every last cell in his body, and shadowy priests tugged at him, the whole room seemed to wheel around him.

He was a machine, became part of a grand symphony of atomic chaos. Becoming initiated and, at once, victim, ghoulishly crawling, he moved closer to the center of the sanctuary while with every further step the throbbing and pounding grew into a cacophony of madness.

When he stepped into the innermost sanctum, he was no longer in space, no longer part of this world.

Here he found it

That which carried everything in itself

And that he himself was ____

Annette Kelm

Synchro

December 2015–January 2016

Location Eschenbachgasse

(ill. p. 676)

Review

Christa Benzer, Der Standard, 5.1.2016

Dollars, Blumenmuster, Faltenwürfe

In Interviews bleibt Annette Kelm immer überaus sachlich: „Um eine Annäherung an die Realität und das Sehen“ würde es ihr in der Fotografie gehen. Und nein, nicht um malerische Aspekte, den Szenestatus der von ihr Porträtierten oder gar um Politisches. Was die 40-jährige Künstlerin (geb. 1975 in Stuttgart), die im November den Camera-Austria-Preis der Stadt Graz erhielt, interessiert, ist der Prozess des Herstellens. Im analogen bildnerischen Verfahren geht es ihr hauptsächlich um „Belichtung und Bildwerte“.

So hieß auch die Fotostrecke für die Zeitschrift Camera Austria, für die Kelm berühmte Vorbilder wie Christopher Williams oder Morgan Fisher ausgewählt hat. Beide Fotografen reflektieren in konzeptuellen Herangehensweisen die technischen Bedingungen, aber auch die repräsentativen Funktionen des Mediums Fotografie. Annette Kelm ist im Wissen um diese Positionen ebenfalls an einer Versachlichung ihrer Motive (Objekte wie Personen) interessiert.

Betrachtet man ihre überaus präzise arrangierten Stillleben, die derzeit in ihrer Ausstellung Synchro in der Galerie Meyer Kainer in Wien zu sehen sind, kann man jedoch kaum vermeiden, eine Bedeutung hineinzulesen: In einer dreiteiligen, als Triptychon arrangierten Serie von 2015 arbeitet sie mit Eindollarnoten. Während sie daraus im ersten Bild das falsch geschriebene Wort „Monney“ bildet, sieht es auf den zwei weiteren Fotos so aus, als hätte man versucht, das Geld gleich wieder zusammenzukratzen.

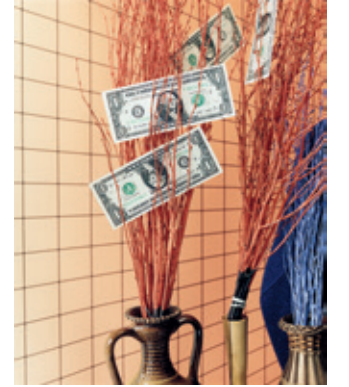
Geldbäumchen

Als wären sie besonders fotogen, tauchen in Kelms Schau überhaupt viele Banknoten auf: In der ebenfalls dreiteiligen Serie Money Tree (2015) fungieren Dollarnoten als Blätter von Dekorpflanzen. One Dollar Right Side / Money Tree One Leaf Right lautet der protokollarische Titel des zweiten Bildes, während das dritte One Dollar Left Side / Money Tree One Leaf Left heißt.

Ähnlich geht Kelm auch in ihrer Serie Home Home Home (2015) vor: Auf allen drei Bildern hat sie das Wort „Home“ – in Form eines dreidimensionalen Deko-Buchstabenobjekts – gemeinsam mit Vasen und Pflanzen zu einem Stillleben auf blauem Bürosessel arrangiert. Man denkt an Interior Design und eine moderne Wohnästhetik, für die sich Kelm von der US-Designerin Dorothy Draper inspirieren ließ.

Die Gegenstände oder ihre Anordnung sind aber hier gar nicht maßgeblich. Das Unterscheidungsmerkmal verraten vielmehr die Titel: Home Home Home / Flashlight und Home Home Home / Daylight sind eben mit Blitzlicht oder bei Tageslicht aufgenommen worden.

Bei allem Bemühen um eine Versachlichung des Sehens – auch Licht und Schatten werden von Annette Kelm niemals als dramatisches Mittel eingesetzt – dringt aber auch Humor durch: Dazu gehört das Verwenden der Dollarnoten genauso wie das vor leuchtend gelbem Hintergrund aufgenommene Jeanshemd, auf dem sie eine Tasse mit Stricherlgesicht platziert hat: Es ist ein Selbstporträt der Künstlerin.



Invitation, 2016