

MANUEL GORKIEWICZ

Opening

18. June 2009, 19:00

Exhibition

19. June – 1. August 2009

With his exhibition at Galerie Mezzanin Manuel Gorkiewicz follows an artistic concept which attempts to create a connection between art-immanent questions and everyday phenomena and which irritates predetermined perceptions. Further scope for interpretation is opened up by the pivotal points set by the artist.

The original open character of the gallery spaces, which seamlessly provided permeability and related outside and inside, has been replaced by an enclosed unit in the sense of a white cube. This neutralised space, the art space, also neutralises what is presented and divests it of history, function and its original contexts of meaning. The neutralised space stages reality. It represents optimum representation.

The enclosed unit can be compared with the spatial characteristics of a conventional photo studio. Artificial light would provide optimum lighting for the motifs to be photographed, which could be staged in front of painted photo backgrounds that were particularly popular in the 1980s. These photo backgrounds are frequently orientated on models from nature and are often inspired by atmospheric sections of landscape and phenomena in the sky.

When Manuel Gorkiewicz then transfers painted canvases, which live a dire existence as props in commercial photo studios with no claim to being art, into art space he shifts their meaning, declares them as artworks and thus simultaneously questions the rules of the system. In doing so the backgrounds are not only shifted into a different context per se but are also presented in frames as details. The meaning of the originally functional props changes, they leave passive space and are actively staged.

The method of interpretation outlined above opens up a level which further condenses Manuel Gorkiewicz's artistic concept. By putting paper lantern "heads" on stands, which in a photo studio usually hold spotlights etc., the artist transposes roles and meanings: the props now represent people in a photo studio, they leave their functional framework and become part of a stage-like setting as actors. The object removed from its conventional contexts of meaning mutates into an anthropomorphic sculpture in art space.

The arrangement of the stands is based on the positioning of the figures in Diego Velasquez's famous painting "Las Meninas" (1656) and can be read as a metaphorical culmination point of the above-mentioned reflections. Velasquez endeavoured to gain acceptance of his work as artistic expression and free himself from the status of a craftsman. It was only possible for artists to enter the aristocracy, which Velasquez strove for, and "Las Meninas" has been interpreted as an attempt at artistic legitimisation.

Gorkiewicz thus ultimately focuses the orientation of the content of his concept by using a major work in the history of art to put up for discussion the conditions and function of art, the claims made of it, the role of the artist, the questioning of habitual ways of seeing and the classical theme of art versus reality. The scope for associations and interpretations created can also by all means be related to Velasquez's masterpiece itself, because as is generally known it has remained shrouded in an aura of mystery until today.