

GALERIE CHRISTINE MAYER

Liebigstraße 39
80538 München

HANS-JÖRG MAYER

MUNICH SENTIMENTAL

8.11. – 12.12.2025

The sign and divinity have the same place and time of birth. Jacques Derrida

Munich Sentimental could signal a return to the place where everything began. The exhibition would then refute Marc LeBlanc's observation that each group of works is presented by a new artist persona, and that once Mayer has tired of this, it is never seen again. Yet the same LeBlanc talks about taboo and death, the abject at large. Which means that, if there is any continuity, it is found in what Mayer paints.

But this continuity gets along very well without the artist – in this way, similar to the moon, which is both attracted and pulled outward and thereby kept at a stable distance. In this sense, Isabelle Graw speaks of the silence surrounding the women depicted in Hans-Jörg Mayer's pictures. As if the pictures were facts and not advertising and news. As if they could only tempt us to reject pieces of the world. In 2022, someone in Galerie Christine Mayer described as abject the fact that Mayer painted a woman at all, let alone a woman as an Indian goddess. It was none other than Hans Sedlmayr who paid as much attention to the speaker as to what she propounded: in general, works of art should not be measured by *what* they represent.

Abject is what is discarded, rejected, but which speaks. It goes without saying, however, that the same can only represent itself as a world, but one that stays silent. The analysis under which the world is split up into facts will always be reversed in synthesis. Even in the kind of analysis that hesitates to cancel itself, the image is added to what can be said either philologically or geometrically. In a catalogue for a group show at the Kunstverein München from 1988, we read in relation to Hans-Jörg Mayer that, in addition to language and geometric form, a third essential element is the image. But what Kant calls synthetic extension goes beyond this. It is added to the conclusion which is already present in the analytic exposition.

What is added is therefore a beginning, but not an origin. Hans-Jörg Mayer informs us that he first painted words and signs because, at the Munich Academy, he was told he couldn't paint. Even the works made in Berlin are, in terms of painting, as unacademic as possible. Institutionally, the only possibility would be to call photography as such an institution. And the only thing that is certain is that this certainty can only be tolerated with the assurance that the mostly photographic models are, after all, a damp source or living origin.

To say that *Munich Sentimental* can be related to *L.A. Confidential*, and that one is an exhibition and from 2025 and the other a film and from 1997, is at best an understatement. To say that emotions are associated with a location gives rise to neither unity nor richness. On the other hand, in the 1988 Kunstverein catalogue, one perhaps finds more said than was intended when we read that the verbal messages in Mayer's work do not function as references to a possible pictorial

content. The exhibition in Galerie Christine Mayer can look back on almost forty years. At the same time, *Munich Sentimental* does not allude to a beginning and an end, or to *Geburt, Sex, and Tod* (birth, sex, and death). These words were cited in or affixed to a picture by Hans-Jörg Mayer in 1985. They are abbreviated in the title G. S. T. Even then, letters were surplus or design, and what was hidden behind was nothing, which is only important because it is imposed on everyone. Man and woman are not *designated* as father and mother but as chairpersons.

In the exhibition *Munich Sentimental*, the works from 2022, 2023, and 2025 can immediately be identified as pictures. Their titles, however, refer primarily to what is added to them, or rather to their subjects. *BOOSTER* shows 2025's most expensive handbag; the title means something like amplifier, rocket, brightener. In all likelihood, the picture will not fetch the 500,000 euros price. But how can it be about successes like that? If the goal were attained, the artist would no longer be captivated but defeated. Triumphant would be what Mayer paints. The continuity that LeBlanc sees lying or hidden there finds an end as a beginning, not as an origin.

It is for this reason that Hans-Jörg Mayer can also exhibit what he paints. In 1988, the Kunstverein München showed the aluminum cast *BLONDE*. But in 2025, *Munich Sentimental* brings together the casts *BONUS*, \$55,95, *2FOR1*, *SEXX*, *SWEET*, *ANGEL*, *SHADES*, *FREE FREE*, and \$2. In aluminum and in iron, everything seems to have been said. That does not mean that everything is also shown. It means rather that the what is shown as text. This is not hidden in a book and cannot even be definitively placed in time. I am reminded of the pages in *Gesture and Speech* in which André Leroi-Gourhan compares the arrangements in advertising with those found in cave painting. Mayer certainly worked in Hans-Sachs-Straße. In 1986 and 1987, he had the works produced in the Gießerei Mayer in Fraunhoferstraße. And now he is showing them in Liebigstraße in Galerie Christine Mayer. But should we speak of inscriptions or pictures? And why is \$55,95 even more of a relief once the artist has painted over it with oil paint?

Alois Riegl depicted late Roman art industry as a transition that proceeds from the haptic to the optical. But this course turns out to be a recourse when the visible gives rise again to the tangible. It is like this that the decline of external perception is made palpable, which is propagated as an expansion into visibility. What remains is only the picture, one that is hardly a likeness, just as it can never be an archetype. In *Munich Sentimental*, Hans-Jörg Mayer once again makes legible what was said by Jacques Derrida: The sign and divinity have the same place and time of birth.

Berthold Reiß

Translated by Benjamin Carter