

LARS REIFFERS

VISUAL ARTIST / BILDENDER KÜNSTLER

COLOGNE / GERMANY

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- all works oil on canvas - Flowers, fish, stills and landscapes as wide as the eye can see! This deceitfully simple sequence of motifs of the everyday is what Lars Reiffers's repertoires of artistic subjects may be reduced to. Composed like still-lives in the manner of the old master painters, the young painter never ceases to turn these motifs to new arrangements, to discover unusual perspectives and to highlight unknown facets.

ART STUDIES AND AWARDS / STUDIUM UND AUSZEICHNUNGEN

1978

born in Engelskirchen Germany

1998-1999

Art studies at Université de Provence Aix-en-Provence (France) Prof. F.Faure, Prof. A.Absensour and Prof. J.-C. Le Gouic

1999-2005

Art studies at Kunstakademie Münster (Academy of Fine Arts), Klasse Professor Hermann-Josef Kuhna

2001

Europe-scholarship of the Kunstakademie Münster
Special Prize Lucas-Cranach-Preis 2001 city of Kronach

2002

Nomination as „Masterpupil“ from Professor Kuhna

2003

Master of Arts

EXHIBITIONS / AUSSTELLUNGEN

SOLO EXHIBITIONS / EINZELAUSSTELLUNGEN

2001

Gallery Kunstgedöns Otte&Co. Köln, Germany

2003

Gallery Blau, Palma de Mallorca, Spain

Maison de Heidelberg, Centre Culturel Allemand, Montpellier,
France

2005

Gallery Art Forum, Palma de Mallorca, Spain

2006

Kunstverein Oberhausen. Germany

2007

Gallery Kunsttachometer Theofilos Klonaris, Palma de
Mallorca, Spain

Gallery Schöber, Dortmund, Germany

Kunstverein Achim, Germany

2008

Gallery Kunsttachometer Theofilos Klonaris, Berlin, Germany

2009

Oberfinanzdirektion Münster, Germany

Kulturhof Westerbeck, Osnabrück, Germany

Gallery Kunsttachometer Theofilos Klonaris, Palma de
Mallorca, Spain

2010

Gallery Hoffmann, Rheda-Wiedenbrück, Germany

2011

Klonaris Fineart, Palma de Mallorca, Spain

2012

Burg Lüdinghausen, Kaktus Kulturforum, Germany

Gallery Cerny und Partner, Wiesbaden, Germany

2013

IHK Bielefeld

Galerie Schöber Art-isotope, Dortmund, Germany

2014

Galerie Gabriele Hovestadt, Nottuln, Germany

Le Coeur, Cologne, Germany

GROUP EXHIBITIONS / GRUPPENAUSSTELLUNGEN

2001

„Lucas Cranach Award“ Fränkische Galerie des Bayerischen Nationalmuseums, Kronach, Germany

2003

„Homage an Lucas Cranach“ Fränkische Galerie des Bayerischen Nationalmuseums, Kronach, Germany

2004

Gallery Blau, Palma de Mallorca, Spain
WGZ-Bank „Klasse Kuhna“, Düsseldorf, Germany
ART.FAIR, Köln, Germany
Gallery Horrach Moya and Art Forum, Palma de Mallorca, Spain
Dolmabahce Serail, Museum for Paintings and Sculpture, Istanbul, Turkey

2005

Art Karlsruhe Artfair, Germany
Gallery Cerny&Puff, Wiesbaden, Germany
Zandari Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
Gallery Art Forum, Palma de Mallorca, Spain
KölnKunst7 , Colonus Carré, Köln, Germany

2006

Zandari Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
Gallery Space IEUM, Peking, China
Gallery Kunsttachimeter Theofilos Klonaris, Palma de Mallorca, Spain
„Stilleben“ 25 Jahre Städtische Galerie im Park, Viersen, Germany

2007

Gallery Kunsttachimeter Theofilos Klonaris, Berlin, Germany

2008

CAR Contemporary Artfair Ruhr, Zeche Zollverein Essen, Germany
Gallery Schöber, Dortmund, Germany

2010

Gallery Cerny&Partner, Wiesbaden, Germany
Driesch:Klonaris Gallery, Palma de Mallorca, Spain
Artspace K5, Köln, Germany

2011

Driesch:Klonaris Gallery, Palma de Mallorca, Spain
Gallery Hoffmann, Rheda Wiedenbrück, Germany

Messmer Foundation, Riegel am Kaiserstuhl, Germany
Art&Antique Kunstmesse, Wiesbaden Germany

2012

Art Karlsruhe Gallery Cerny und Partner, Germany
Galerie Michael Nolte Münster, Germany
Art.Fair Cologne Gallery Cerny und Partner, Germany
Klonaris Fine Art, Palma de Mallorca, Spain

2013

Art Antique Wiesbaden Gallery Cerny und Partner, Germany
Art Karlsruhe Gallery Cerny und Partner, Germany
Galerie Hovestadt Germany
Klonaris Fine Art, Palma de Mallorca, Spain
Art Kopenhagen mit Galerie Hoffmann
Hamburg Artweek mit Galerie Hoffmann
"Das vierte Element" Wasserburg Haus Graven, Langenfeld,
Kunst Service Galerie Klaus Siepmann, Düsseldorf, Germany
Art-Fair Cologne mit Galerie Cerny und Partner

2014

Art Antiques Frankfurt mit Galerie Cerny und Partner
Art Karlsruhe mit Galerie Cerny und Partner
Klonaris Fine Art, Palma de Mallorca, Spain
Galerie Hovestadt, Nottuln, Germany
Art Kopenhagen mit Galerie Hoffmann
Art Fair Köln mit Galerie Cerny und Partner

2015

Galerie Hoffmann Rheda-Wiedernbrück
Galerie Cerny und Partner Wiesbaden
Klonaris Fine Art, Palma de Mallorca

ABOUT MY PAINTINGS / ÜBER MEINE MALEREI

The brilliance of his colours, the smooth flow of the stroke of his brush as well as the occasionally irritating haptic and tactile qualities of his blossoms and leaves, of water and fish bodies automatically remind the viewer of the art of the 17th century – in particular, of the Dutch still-lives, the so-called nature morte, which should immediately appear in front of the inner eye of the viewer. It is all the more surprising and remarkable at the same time that the artistic personality behind these canvasses was born in 1978!

Lars Reiffers, prize winner of the Lucas Cranach special award in 2001, first studied painting in Aix-en-Provence, the birthplace of Paul Cézanne, before continuing his studies at the Kunstakademie Münster in Professor Kuhna's class. In 2002, Herrmann-Josef Kuhna declared Reiffers his master student. Also his teacher has an intense creative prepossession with colour and its effects: central to his (Kuhna's) style are the individual dots and patches of colour, which derive their appeal from an amalgamation of haptic presence and virtual appearance. Motivated and inspired by his teacher, Lars Reiffers soon developed his own artistic signature style, which he has continuously been shaping and re-modelling. Despite all the exuberant opulence and decorativeness that is a prima vista characteristic of his painting, his work is driven by much more than a mere display of surfaces. And this is already evidenced in the image conception stage:

The artistic process begins with collecting and documenting, in other words, Reiffers uses the camera to study his motifs: the Mediterranean markets in the French city of Aix had offered him the sights of fish of all colours, sizes and of all kinds; at home in Cologne it is the flora and fauna in his parents' spacious garden that catches his eye. The camera functions as an archive, the individual flowers and leaves, fish and all the other animals that he catalogues this way form something like an evidence room, a repertoire of forms and motifs that the artist can access at any time, completely according to his imagination and independent of the seasons and regardless where he may be residing presently. It is only in the artist's workshop that they are brought to new life. The photographic templates are projected onto the canvas; proportions and composition are carefully arranged in thin glazes of colour. In the following act of painting, however, the artist liberates himself from the template. He develops colour, form and space autonomously, which is a procedure that takes up a lot of time.

Lars Reiffers captures nature in her manifold forms of appearance, for example water in states of calm or of movement, or the changes of fish bodies in the sun. These

paintings are portraits of nature! But in them, he does not merely document a temporary condition, such as the crystalline and prismatically shining surface of a fish body in the sunlight or the silken and shimmering and extremely fragile, even vulnerable skin of a peony flower. In arranging his motifs on the canvas in an extremely aesthetic manner, he adds another dimension of his own commentary. Reiffers is not just a reporter of images, somebody who would subject himself to the subjects of his paintings. Instead, he is an empathic observer, instructing us with his compositions and simultaneously appealing to our innermost. Like a conductor, he guides, or sometimes abducts us deeply into the realm of ontology, the study of being. Especially in the face of an accelerated flow and pace of information, a meditative concentration on the elementary and, thus, the existential, proves to be an important anchor and pillar for our orientation. In this context, nature is to be considered as an ideal, in which we can read the whole circle of life.

Exemplary in this sense is his recently completed “Frühlingserwachen” (Spring Awakening – 2011). As a viewer, one will not just be standing in front of the canvas; one will be drawn right into it. On the one hand, this is owing to the format size of more than 2 metres in width and almost 2 metres in height, and on the other hand to the three-dimensional presentation of flowers and leaves. Being drawn suggestive close to the canvas, one cannot escape its presence. These flowers and leaves are free of any hint of an attitude of trivialising cuteness and are not reduced to being mere accessories or decorative objects. Not only strength and vitality unfolds in the sheer size of the flowers, but also weakness and vulnerability. The continuously recurring rhythm of becoming, living and decaying, which is evidenced in nature, here becomes a metaphor. By means of the size of the motif, the human viewer is relativized and does not stand above nature, but is a part of it.

The different arrangements of individual flowers and bouquets spread before us ostentatiously, almost monstrously, look down upon us or lead our view downwards in the face of withered leaves. The opulent materiality may sometimes capture us completely and leads our thoughts away from a purely rational observation. Hence, also classic processes of perception are questioned. The secret is precisely in such parts of the canvas in which we can only perceive a part of the whole from a short distance instead of being able to rationally categorise the details of the picture. There and then, the viewer is confronted with surface, with colour of the finest qualities, with shimmering texture, with the drive of the stroke of the brush – in other words, with pure colour painting, which has its own life and pulse. It is only when put into context, with some

distance to the canvas, that these abstract, illusionist sections dissolve again. In nearly all his paintings, Reiffers plays with the ambivalence of the two poles. This ambiguity provides a space, in which the frontier between the abstract and the figurative can be blurred at any time. Allowing the viewer to dissect and reconstruct his images is what makes Reiffers a painter of a very intense strength of image.

This is also the case with the fish, with their heads and bodies, such as in the painting "Kingsize". In the beginning there is colour, pure painting, which is the fundament of his works and which stands above all aspects of content. Again, like in the floral paintings, he zooms into the fish skin, bringing it close to the painting's surface and liberates the motif from its original context. The result is a rejection of totality in favour of the fragmented and of excerpts and the consequent liquidation of all narrative details, transforming the scaled body into a new dimension of perception and meaning. The freedom and autonomy of this artist reaches far enough that a connection to the original motif may still be made and that its context may still be re-constructed, but that none of these is in any way central. What remains, is a colourist painting enwrought with different patterns, structures and pigments that truly develops a life of its own (even without the fish head): here, predominantly the colours turquoise, blue and orange, applied in tiny blotches and dots, construct the sturdy, glistening and shimmering fish body. Once again, traditional modes of visual perception are reduced ad absurdum. This is, because seeing and recognition are two different parameters of image construction. "Seeing" means perception, while "recognition" is dependent upon reflection and contextualisation. Already in the late 19th century, John Ruskin, the spokesman of the English Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of painters, differentiated between a seeing vision and a recognising vision. More simply and in the words of Goethe, this means, that "we only see what we know". And, thus, the painter directly appeals to the viewer and his or her senses to immediately follow the beauty of the changing play of colours and to be guided by it emotionally.

If the paintings' titles occasionally offer a little help and instructive guidance to the viewer's vision, it still holds true that "the painted picture is more important than reality", as Lars Reiffers points out. The message of his paintings is owing to this suggestive value of inner images, which we all carry inside us, but which often remain hidden to ourselves in these fast-paced times. Here again, images from the off-limits of our inner selves are evoked, and Reiffers's paintings become a projection space as much as a resonating body.

In his "Water Paintings", Reiffers reaches out into unknown

dimensions. There is no other artist in contemporary discourse who addresses this theme from below the water surface and, thus, approaches the sphere that is hidden to the eye. The viewer is once again guided by the artist (diver?), but here, the focus is on the cosmos below the water surface. Just like in the floral paintings and the fish paintings, there is no distracting narrative detail here, no story is told, but, instead, all is dominated by a silence and harmony, which, however, also has a ghostly and mysterious aura. Let us consider the painting "Altar", in which there is still a suggestion of the calm water surface, but in which the rock and stone formation takes up more than 2/3 of the picture surface. The colours blue and black dominate the composition, and immediately this creates a cold and insecure feeling in the viewer. Again, we find ourselves standing right inside the image, but we are lacking the solid ground below our feet: we lose control, the eye searches and finds its anchoring point in a formation with a sacral aura, which is evoked by the painting's title. The three rocks, the outer two of which are dominant, evoke associations of power and naturalness, but also of spirituality: "The soul of man resembles the water", Goethe once wrote. Water constitutes an inexhaustible source of exploration; in it, humans find everything that also characterises their emotional states: from romance through fear down to danger, to catastrophe even. Water in all its states is the ur-substance of life. With these pictures, Lars Reiffers conjures up metaphysical aspects, opening the conscious mind to the innermost, hidden off-limits areas of human existence and, thus, being far removed from simply copying nature.

The images of Lars Reiffers are an expression of such conditions and emotional states that remind us of our existence, like when we are touching a stone or rock, when we feel the force of water, when we wake through fallen leaves in autumn. The human being is put into a state of alertness and sensitivity, or even sometimes reminded of the fragility and vulnerability of life. We should absorb his paintings with all our senses – like music, which can put us into a state of inner motion, into a rhythm, into concentration and introspection while listening! Nature in the shape of flora and fauna, of fish and water possesses a truly universal character, and the compositions of Lars Reiffers are unagitated, yet impressive evidence for this: in nature, vitality and the will to life, but also finiteness, fleetingness and, not least, inscrutability are articulated non-verbally.

Dr. Gabriele Hovestadt

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Lars Reiffers
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