



NEWSLETTER N° 8

Dear artist friends

The year 2015 is drawing to a close and we deeply sense the unsettling events that are taking place.

Navid Kermani was awarded the Peace prize of the German Book Trade and in bringing his speech to a conclusion, he asked the question: „Is there hope? Yes, there is always hope. May I, as Peace-Prizewinner invoke war? No, I may not, but I can ask you to pray. Even if you are not religious, your mind could be turning compassionately towards the persons the IS kidnapped and murdered. Pray or wish that all the hostages may be freed and that Syria and Iraq become free again. If you wish, you can stand up, so that we may hold the image of brotherhood against the terrorists' snuff videos.

Rudolf Steiner said in his famous lecture called „The Work of the Angels In Man's Astral Body“ (GA 182: 9.10.1918), that Angels weave pictures into the astral body of man to help bring about a special disposition for the social sphere of the future: „And indeed in forming these pictures the Angels work on a definite principle, namely, that in the future no human being is to find peace in the enjoyment of happiness, when others beside him are unhappy. An impulse of Brotherhood ...“

Isn't that Christmas? Isn't the birth of Christ the first light impulse of brotherhood and sisterhood?

„We moderns must create works where in the form element speaks more eloquently than nature itself does, yet speaks in a manner so akin to it that every line and color becomes nature's prayer to the divine...“ (Rudolf Steiner on 22.02.1923 in Dornach).

The question as to how art can be imbued by the Christ impulse, how art can act as a mediator to other fields of life, has filled many section workgroups. We are continually challenged to exchange our various views objectively and to meet in a sphere of brotherhood. We would like to share impressions in pictures and reports in these section information newsletters.

May this time of Christmas kindle light and warmth in your hearts and we look forward to inspiring gatherings in the new year 2016.

Marianne Schubert (Section leader)
Folke Gerstner (Assistant)

Walter Kugler

The heavens below

Impressions from the art section conference in May 2015 at the Goetheanum

When you go down a never ending corridor and then turn left through the door, you enter the illustrious Schreinerei hall. Laid out on the floor, you see a field of limestones laid out in an exact square. The artist Claudia Schluermann fetched these local stones from the quarry in Liesberg and brought them here, so that we may experience the ground on which we stand, and in doing so she challenged the many questions playing on people's faces as they entered the room, into acute awareness.

On the left wall we see a large picture. Is it a painting? Is it a photograph? It seems to hide something. On the floor in front, we see an arrangement of cardboard boxes, some standing upright, some lying. They have obviously been used to carry a number of broken, rather large eggshells or shell halves scattered around on the floor. Then we see a fan, but we had to wait till Sunday morning before Cornelia Falkenhahn could reveal her project: „Set up of experiments / stage / costume / installation / object.“

And finally in another segment of the room, we discover a wall with series of small photographs telling a story. On the floor we see outlined and sculpted shapes drawing our attention towards something wanting to come into being by their ornamental, symmetric and asymmetric arrangement. The carefully distributed animal skulls seem to confirm the impression. Then there was a closed white cardboard box in front of the longest wall, with a small bronze figure standing on it, both its hands lifted up and it seemed to be dancing on a wire, casting playful shadow figures on the wall, reminding us of Harold Niggli's gratifies. Jochen Breme, the artist, showed us in his work-report on Friday how these single objects could be brought to life.

The participants were asked to watch carefully and listen to the three artists reporting on their work, before embarking on intensive discussions. There was enough material and the participants had as much to say as the artist themselves. Jochen Breme had a lot to do as well. He started his report with a calm and extremely concentrated performance in which he uses his hands to gather all the bits of aluminium foil from the floor, then he picks them up and starts sculpting a three dimensional shape like a hat placed on someone's head. So one witnesses a process of contracting, expanding, turning inside out, as in evolving nature. But in this performance, one could only understand the shape coming into being, by following every step the artist takes.

The artist called this performance „capping“ and it was originally developed nine years ago. It is a wonderful concept for the synthesis of movement and form. Jochen Breme, a professor at the Alanus University of arts and social sculpture, mentioned his childhood experiences in which those things we now call „installations“ were a part of normal everyday life, like aluminium foil was used to safe-keep the life of chocolate. In devoting part of his studies to embryology, Breme discovered an impressive language of form and he demonstrated this by showing us incidental images including Toyota's car emblem of three interweaving ellipses. Nevertheless he sees his main work in his engagement for his students. It must be a wonderful experience to have such a teacher! The same applies to Claudia Schluermann and her

students and pupils. Schluermann is not only a social worker and a sculptress, but she also took a doctor's degree last year at the Brookes University, Oxford, focussing on practical and theoretical aspects of the social structure. In her review, she described how the performance, placing art in a special environment, and interacting with people's membrane-like sensitivity conveys meaning to artistic work. Her whole concentration is focussed on the actual process and its transformation, thus embodying the guideline for her work with different materials. She quotes the Austrian sculptor Karl Prantl, (1923 - 2010) to express her present intention: „Stones are my teachers“.

Every viewer and listener feels that Cornelia Falkenhan's works have an immediate impact on one's sense for meaning, especially when she describes her cardboard boxes as collectors of vulnerable and fragile ideas which can become brittle, break and fall apart so easily. But the non-perceptible, wanting to be set free, is also one of her main concerns. For example, a fan generates just enough wind to play with the vertical stripes cut from a picture in the background. Parts of Leonardo's „Madonna and the child in the lap of Anna“ are revealed in a brief moment, as though the past is telling the present what meaning it wants to convey. One becomes aware that Cornelia Falkenhan is not only a sculptress but a set and costume designer as well. In her set design for Tankred Dorst's play „The Secret Garden“, she uses projections to visualize the soul of the Italian poet and Mussolini's spiritual mentor, D'Annunzio. The world is turned upside down, the blue sky with small white clouds, offer the poet a floor for his actions, everything else is above. What captivates the viewer, is the change of perspective.

All of this marginalizes every day life, customs and conventions. Questions come up. Answers ask for new questions: Is there anything that separates present day art from anthroposophical art? Nothing? Must present day art and anthroposophical art always be antagonists? No - because every piece of art is always a part of the present, so is anthroposophical art. The art historian, Roland Halfen, didn't ask these questions directly in his talk on the first evening, but explored the whole context. In his particular humorous earnestness, he quoted Steiner dispersing any doubts: „Art has to do with the general development of soul-life and will always progress with it.“ (Lecture 17th of February, 1918 GA 271). And „Art must enter consciousness as it did in former epochs.“ (15th of February 1918 GA 271). That means every epoch has its assignment, and so does the present day, presupposing one has woken up to it. Steiner was not afraid of being interested in contemporary artists, he placed equal emphasis on the present and the future, on new ideas and new forms, discarding any kind of repetition, saying: „A piece of art is all the more important, the more it has arisen out of it's own, arisen out of that which can only exist in a singular person, not working by the repetition of others.“ (Essay on „Modern Criticism“ in GA 30). Steiner's relation to Ethics also belongs to this context and Halfen amalgamated all of these to make his point that they are connected to the motto of the conference: „there cannot be any rules in art, no compulsory aesthetics. Every piece of art demands it's own aesthetics.“ (Modern Criticism). Halfen must have been pleased to find out that Marianne Schubert, who became the new section leader in March 2014, had enabled present day anthroposophical artists to communicate their work on each morning of the conference. But the conference being a challenge for the participants on the one hand, was at the same time a huge present on the other. One just has to accept it. Sustainability has been cared for.



pictures on the left: Cornelia Falkenhan's installation. Talking in small groups after the lectures. Jochen Breme's installation



picture above: installation Claudia Schlürmann; below, Jochen Breme

Roland Halfen

Sense Experience as the Source of Art

Opening Lecture held on 10th May 2015 at the Ascension Conference of the Visual Art Section of the School of Spiritual Science at the Goetheanum, in the Schreinerei Hall, Dornach, Switzerland

Dear Conference Participants!

My talk today is, firstly, a kind of introduction to this year's Ascension conference of the Visual Art Section, during which the works of contemporary artists will be presented and discussed. But over and above this immediate occasion I would like to offer some food for thought for the work of the Section in general, as it seeks to balance creatively between engagement with Rudolf Steiner's artistic work, and inquiry into new, so far untraveled paths of a spiritually oriented art. Here my comments will follow the clear thread of seven remarks by Steiner which are, perhaps unjustifiably, too little known. During the course of my work over many years as the publisher of Rudolf Steiner's artistic oeuvre within the Collected Works, the perspective these remarks offer has become increasingly important to me. The aspects contained in them seem to me very apt as fruitful guidelines for creating, viewing and judging art in the anthroposophic context. And, as a figure who assuredly knew something about art once said, "Only what is fruitful can be true."

The first of these aspects concerns one of the cultural parameters necessary here, in our case the history of art in the 20th century. As long as we do not think this is simply a history of decline (starting perhaps already with the end of the Renaissance) but instead a deeply founded evolution closely allied with the evolution of human consciousness and of all culture - which can therefore scarcely be adequately described in terms of 'good' or 'bad' - then we will regard Steiner's emphasis on the evolutionary aspect as illuminating. In a lecture he gave to artists of various schools in Munich on 17 February 1918¹, he said this:

I "[...] I believe that art must continually advance along with our generally advancing life of soul."

Here he very carefully stresses the close connection of art with a 'generally advancing life of soul'. This intimate relationship between art and the human psyche, in a cultural context informed by its era, already indicates that art does not and should not lead a separate existence from social conditions in general, but rather proceeds from inner experiences that are in dialogue with their respective society and culture, are influenced by these, engage with them or also actively intervene in them, and in the process develop experiential insights. He is not speaking here, either, of a specifically anthroposophic art, but of art as such; nor is the expression 'advance' employed in the naïve sense in which all development is seen as an improvement on the past. Instead he uses the word initially in the sense of change and transformation.

If we relate this statement to the artworks that Steiner conceived, supervised or himself created between 1907 and 1924, we can conclude that these likewise did not stand outside the cultural milieu of the time, but were part of the general development of culture and of human interiority. If we take just one 'type' of such work, for instance his sketches, changes

in their artistic form between 1907 and 1924 can be described as a development which we can even subdivide into several phases ². The same is true of the field of architecture, where, in relation solely to buildings for the Goetheanum Hill, we can trace developments from the first Goetheanum through its adjoining buildings to the model for the second Goetheanum. In this trajectory, the most striking sign of advance is probably that from a largely rounded organic building style to one whose form language is polygonal, without any immediate motive for such development apparent in the phenomena themselves. Rudolf Steiner himself indirectly addressed this aspect of the change when – already at the time of the first Goetheanum building – he stressed in public that he would design a second such building differently from the first (as he demonstrated after the first Goetheanum fire when he conceived the model for the second), and a third differently again ³.

In the case of the Goetheanum buildings, these changes and advances can be understood in terms of aspects that Steiner himself already suggested, such as a more intimate familiarity with the whole Dornach surroundings developed through years of living there. This intimacy, which Steiner described as love for this landscape, was articulated in the second building, conceived in 1924, through its evidently greater affinity with the geological forms of the Swiss Jura. But it is also absolutely legitimate to ask whether the developing architecture of the early 20th century between 1913 and 1924 might not also show signs of what we have described already as a general advance in the human psyche.

At the same time, the scope of such an advance may allow the specific nature of Steiner's work to become still more clearly apparent. While the first Goetheanum showed some affinity with the waning days of art nouveau ⁴, the second Goetheanum can easily be placed into the diverse context of Expressionist architecture ⁵. This does not mean of course that Steiner's works are thereby robbed of their individuality and originality simply by being assigned, and thus subordinated, to a general cultural tendency. Actually, the reverse is true: art movements such as art nouveau and Expressionism can be interpreted as symptoms of altered or entirely new values in a particular culture or society that point in turn to deeper spiritual transformations.

The turn towards abstraction from 1907 onwards and ultimately to non-representational art around 1910, the emergence of many diverse art movements in the second decade of the 20th century which exerted an influence well beyond the two world wars, the development of "pure" forms by Javlensky, Malevich or Brancusi – all this and a great deal more formed the context within which Steiner's works must be considered. Against the backdrop of this complex situation we can discover and demonstrate specific potentials that still retain their validity today. We also encounter the theme of advance in Rudolf Steiner's second quotation, in which he expressly advises his audience to participate in developments in contemporary art, and to learn to sense the impulses at work there. Yet in no way does he regard such efforts to understand modern art as a marginal luxury, a secondary undertaking to be practised alongside one's own artistic work, but rather as a habit that should be cultivated and developed. Thus in a lecture that Steiner gave in Munich only a few days previously to the first quote, on 15 February ⁶, he says:

II “[...] and the more we accustom ourselves to gaining a living sense of the new impulses in art, the more this will signify a genuine advance such as we also of course endeavour to realise in the domain of anthroposophic spiritual science.”

'Genuine advance' is here seen as the common denominator of a living, feeling involvement both in contemporary art and anthroposophic work. Why does Steiner here stress the 'genuine' nature of such advance? Perhaps because a living, feeling involvement in modern art will always confront us with something new that cannot be derived from anything we have previously known. Habituating ourselves to engage with ever new phenomena in a living way, and meet these with interest and lack of prejudice, is the only way to avoid pursuing an entirely predetermined path. Steiner himself offered several instances of lively participation in the contemporary art of his time, such as his visit to the studio of the Swede Frank Heyman, little known today, who was creating Cubist sculptures as early as 1908/9 and must therefore be counted amongst the avant-garde of that era. Better known are Steiner's encounters with artists from the contemporary art scene in Munich, such as the pupil of Kandinsky, Maria Giesler, through to Alexei Javlensky. In relation to Heyman, Steiner himself once illuminatingly expressed the impression made on a spiritual researcher by his artworks:

These are figures that strike the realistic sensibility of our age in a way that we might perhaps characterise as follows: „What kind of crazy painter is this? We see here a few colossal figures whose heads appear in prismatic rather than regularly conceived shape. The hands, gestures, in short the whole figure, are composed of all kinds of angles and corners. But this figure makes a different impression on the esoteric researcher. He is immediately struck by the fact that this art is drawn from apprehension of a higher world. If one knows the real secrets of the human etheric body, if one knows how this etheric body is a body of forces underlying the physical body, how every movement expressed by the latter is always accompanied by a quite specific movement in the etheric body, then one has the sense that this artist was creating out of the forces of the etheric body and that his forms are drawn from supersensible experiences ⁷“

These passages seem to me exemplary in their engagement with works that present us with hitherto unknown aspects, things we are not used to. At first sight we may make negative judgements because a work is so different from what past experience has taught us to recognise and value. Those who do not, like Steiner, possess the capacity for esoteric perception, may nevertheless at least gain from this perspective a sense of respect towards something unfamiliar, which does not necessarily disclose its nature fully at a first encounter, or even after further acquaintance. This stance can also help to counter the very prevalent view that something new we are presented with, which we neither understand nor immediately feel to be aesthetic, must necessarily have arisen from a superficial and therefore inartistic sensibility.

Even great artists are not safe from such prejudices. The young Wassily Kandinsky, for instance, reacted with indignation to his first sight of one of Monet's haystacks, saying that the painter "had no right to paint so imprecisely" ⁸. In a clearly spontaneous outburst he interpreted Monet's approach to painting as a violation of the moral duty of all painters to present clearly discernible objects to their viewers. And those who do not comply with this are committing a social act with their work in which they transgress the values of society. In my experience, when encountering phenomena previously unknown to us, the most fruitful attitude is to assume that the work before us is founded on actual experiences, and that the artist must have been serious in his intentions even if there is a playful, ironic or provocative intention at work in it.

But even when conversation with an artist inclines us to the view that he is handling his experiences and the artistic material in a merely superficial or frivolous way, a masterly eye can turn, quite irrespective of this appraisal, to the experiences underlying it, and at a certain moment perhaps even ideally understand an artist better than he understands himself and the world. The viewer may even be able to do this more easily because he himself did not create the work. Thus the judgement of a work of art is something entirely different from the artist's own self-appraisal. From a certain point of view in fact we might say that the latter is simply one of the viewers of his work. Mere responsibility for its creation does not mean that a viewer must intrinsically accept or even submit to the artist's own estimation of his work and himself. In the same way there is absolutely no need to share Nietzsche's view of himself in order to acknowledge the fruitfulness of his works; the same is true of Villa-Lobos in the realm of music, or of Salvador Dali in painting.

But now let us turn very specifically to a few qualities that, in Rudolf Steiner's view, distinguish the advance of art in its connection with general human advances. In February 1918 in Munich⁹, once again, he says the following:

III "[...] one has the sense that what actually occurs in art, or in artistic creativity and its appreciation, must today be raised higher in our consciousness than was the case in earlier eras of art."

This sentence is formulated in a strikingly open way, and therefore allows very diverse interpretations. It can be understood firstly to refer to reflection on artworks of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century which Steiner himself has seen, which had given him the impression that the creators of these works could sense the need – more or less unconsciously – to become more aware than previously of the process of artistic creation and its appreciation. Or we can also understand it to mean that such a need is acknowledged only by those who seek "genuine" advances in art and the science of the spirit, and wish to pursue these more consciously.

Or again we can understand the sentence very intuitively as referring to the fact that, since instinctual artistic capacities are increasingly failing as time continues, many things, activities and processes that were accomplished in the past in an unconscious or even instinctive way are now becoming, and must become, ever more conscious. As instinctive abilities wane, art too will fail if it looks only to the past. Frank Heyman's works, specifically, could stand as an example here of artists raising deeper and subtler apprehensions of their own constitution to the surface, and bringing this to consciousness in their artworks despite the isolation and misunderstanding this may bring them.

On the other hand, these works also need viewers who have prepared themselves to receive them, who are willing to raise the process of aesthetic experience into ever greater awareness. This requires a beholder who is willing to engage in such forward development; to actively free himself, above all, from traditional aesthetic criteria which may no longer correspond to newly created works, and to consciously cultivate independence from them. The way in which these new works affect the beholder is in fact not distinct from the latter, nor from his readiness or otherwise to encounter the new and unknown.

In his writings and lectures Rudolf Steiner repeatedly spoke of processes that lie beneath the surface of ordinary awareness, not only in relation to what happens during artistic creation but also in the aesthetic experience of the beholder. On this occasion I want to highlight just a few themes that can clarify how Steiner's aesthetic inquiries anticipate certain developments in 20th century art and also render them comprehensible. These developments can certainly be seen in connection with the "generally advancing life of soul" in this era.

In the spring of 1909, in advance of the first summer play performances that began in Munich in 1909 with the staging of Edouard Schuré's *The Children of Lucifer*, Steiner decided to reissue the edited text of a lecture he had given in 1888 at Vienna's Goethe Association, on "Goethe as Father of a New Aesthetics". The decision to cultivate aesthetic reflections alongside the performance of artistic works can be seen to accord with Steiner's view, cited above, that processes involved in creating and engaging with art should be raised increasingly into consciousness. In the autumn of the same year, in a talk for the first time entitled "Anthroposophy", given during the annual general meeting of the Theosophical Society in Berlin, Steiner elaborated a view of the senses that extends beyond the accepted scope of the five senses to include additional "lower" and "upper" senses.

In an additional lecture not originally included in the programme, entitled "The Nature of the Arts", he went further in his Goethe-related thoughts on aesthetics by firstly locating the sources of different art forms in different sensory realms, and secondly elucidating the connection between artistic work and diverse spiritual beings. The latter he said were both connected with the origins of the sensory organs and also work through these in artistic activity. These lectures which have proven controversial chiefly because of their imaginative and, to some, seemingly allegorical mode of presentation, are of particular interest in that Steiner here anticipates perspectives which in retrospect grew to be of ever greater importance for 20th century art. Given the statement that processes connected with artistic work will become ever more conscious, it is illuminating to recognise that, on the one hand, 20th century art increasingly discovered and opened up the human body as field of perception, and on the other that it extended artistic articulation into the realm of the upper senses.

In his 1909 lecture, however, Steiner basically accomplishes nothing other than concretise something he included in the "definition" of beauty formulated in 1888 as "a reality in the sense world"¹⁰, by asking what such sensory reality can encompass. The various forms of art, in this view, do not simply take up outward sensory perceptions so as to endow them with the character of spirit in artistic activity but instead, in dance, in mime and all movement arts, they also invoke the internal bodily perceptions of the sense of balance, movement and life.

Yet with the rationale he develops here, Steiner is by no means implying that we must remain within the confines of traditional art forms. To take just one obvious example, the *Goetheanum* aims to be a work of sculptural, of architecture, which the beholder should perceive in process terms as musical in character. Discovery of the anthropological sources of traditional art forms thus by no means signifies a rejection of cross-genre or new types of art, but instead offers orientation that may allow us to draw on these sources to create new works. These would neither copy old forms nor detach themselves from art's development in the modern era.

In relation to an increasing focus on the human body as medium of experience and articulation, we may perhaps think firstly here of body art, where painting uses the body as a canvas; or also the Anthropometry of Yves Klein, in which the body was used as painting instrument, as brush or printing mould. These are still relatively external ways in which the body is integrated into the visual arts. The early work of Rebecca Horn leads us into deeper regions: here, using body prostheses, she explored the enigma of how human sentience is capable of extending beyond the living body into non-living attachments to (or replacements of) our corporeality. In this context, the English sculptor Anthony Gormley recollected a childhood experience in which, in unusual circumstances, he was able to extend his bodily sentience beyond the normal confines of his physical body, simultaneously having a primal spatial experience of embodiment which has continued to be a theme and question preoccupying him in his life and work.

In the exhibition "Rudolf Steiner and Contemporary Art" in 2011, Anish Kapoor installed a room where each visitor could be massaged individually, and at the same time perceive inwardly appearing colour phenomena. Here colour was not used as a material medium that approaches the beholder from without, but instead was evoked and configured as a phenomenon of bodily experience. And one last example: at the 2013 Venice Biennale, artist Kim Sooja lined the Korean pavilion in coloured, reflecting foil which first transported the viewer into a seemingly bottomless space, thus invoking a fear of falling; the bodily feeling accompanying this was greatly intensified in a further, completely dark and soundproofed room so that – together with inwardly arising after-images of the outward experience – one could have a greatly accentuated experience of one's own breathing and pulse.

In the other direction, the realm of the upper senses was also increasingly discovered in 20th century art as a medium for perceiving and articulating artistic processes. Here, above all, we can first regard the broad field of interpersonal perception and social processes as mediating the sense of I or ego. It is well known that the "social sculpture" work of Joseph Beuys developed social processes into a medium of perception, articulation and wide-ranging reflection. More recently, this field of (I-) perception has been intensified in the actions and performances of the Serbian artist Marina Abramovic (in her action "The Artist is Present" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York) into an immediate encounter between two people no longer in any way impeded by extraneous factors.

Thus we can sum up here as follows: extending the spectrum of experience and articulation towards the "lower", inner-body, and the "upper", social senses, has become a firm part of the development of art in the 20th century. Rudolf Steiner not only theoretically anticipated these developments but, through his innovative insights, also enabled us to locate genuine aesthetic experience within these processes, and illumine their deep anthropological dimensions.

But other aspects too are connected with these developments. If the perceptual realms of art expand beyond hitherto obligatory confines, previously acknowledged borders of aesthetic self-perception will also change. In particular, a gradually awakening interest in everything process-related, also already within the bounds of the visual arts, means that art products and objects recede from their previous primary significance to become instead just a starting point, a material phase or a merely constituent phenomenon of superordinate processes in

which they are embedded. And this is not merely externally so but also inwardly. As far back as Kandinsky's innovative treatise *On the Spiritual in Art*, this key principle was set in motion: no longer to seek the true locus of art naively in an object, as previously, but in the process of beholding it. This has significance initially for aesthetic reflection in our experience of already existing objects but also then necessarily exerts an influence on further artistic creation.

The consequence of this as the 20th century progressed was that art increasingly burst its boundaries, not only in the concept of a 'work' as the start and end point of all aesthetic reflections, but also above all in the development of socially-oriented action art. Here we can no longer speak of a work in the traditional sense, with its clearly definable boundaries, but instead must think in terms of open processes in which the primary and decisive thing are individual and ultimately non-confined perceptions and experiences that cannot in any way be commodified.

This progressive aspect of 20th century art can already be discovered in Steiner's comments on the first Goetheanum, but at the same time also in his astonishingly radical stance towards the status of this aspect. In a lecture on 21 November 1914 in Dornach ¹¹ he says:

IV "[...] and that is the principle, you see, of the new art as opposed to the old art. These old arts were always concerned with what is present in outward space. In the new art this is no longer the concern. [...] This is, I would like to say, the key aspect of the evolutionary advance in which we stand."

The importance of this dictum cannot be overestimated, though of course it can be overlooked. To take it seriously means also that we radically revise the criteria with which we view and judge visual objects and the processes connected with them. Taking the example of the installations by Ilya Kabakov we can elucidate in a direct and striking way the extent to which Steiner's indications at the beginning of the 20th century can offer a foundation for apt understanding of these works. Whereas the traditionally oriented viewer assumes that Kabakov's installations are works in the traditional sense, in which the form of distinct objects is altered to provoke aesthetic experiences, in fact Kabakov uses daily objects that have previously been used and utilised. He leaves them in the form in which he found them but groups them into new configurations. The ordinary beholder, with his outlook and expectations, may see nothing more in the installations than a collection of rubbish, whereas Kabakov is in fact concerned with the relationships between the objects: with the shaping of the viewer's inner processes between expectation and memory, sharp focus and overview, between the ordinary and the extraordinary, and between waking and dream.

Thus his realm of art is not the sensory object in a more limited sense but the viewer's consciousness with its intentions, content, processes and qualities. Here traditional aesthetic criteria such as unity, proportion and balance do certainly figure, though not in the naive realism of sensory attention to perceived objects but in the enlarged awareness of the beholder - who must, however be open in turn to his own inner experiencing of these qualities. However variously perceived the details of Kabakov's works may be, he can only create this form of art through a deeply and inwardly experienced sense that modern art is no longer predicated on external objects in space; and at the same time he must assume that there is an audience for this art - or that there will eventually be. Only if we do not go along with this

development will we regard Kabakov's works as an expression of art's general decline; for we have failed to meet the conditions in our own awareness for discovering this kind of art where it is experienced: in the – supersensible – inner life of the beholder.

Thus we are concerned here with two kinds of development that are closely connected in the 20th century with the theme of sense experience as the source of art:

- A. Enlarging the scope of the senses in the visual arts to encompass the lower and upper senses.
- B. Gradually developing awareness of the productive powers in human consciousness, i.e. overcoming of naïve realism by acknowledging that the true locus of art is not the outward object but a process of consciousness that encompasses it and actively unfolds the potential the artist has embedded in it.

Today, in the context of these developments, in a much more precise way than previously, we can address the "sensory-supersensible" process involved in both the creation and experience of art. Artists such as Ilya Kabakov (in the installation field) or Bill Viola (in the video installation field) create works in which the artist is clearly shaping not just outward objects but also the beholder's space of consciousness, his expectations and fears, his intentions and experiences, his perception and thinking. This connection between sense perception, thinking, receptivity and productivity is something I now wish to consider a little further.

During the course of the 20th century, a subtle feeling has arisen (among other things) that our perception of the world through conceptual thinking has a "deadening" character. A reflex identification of perceptual phenomena, increasingly intensified in our "rapid-fire" culture, reinforces this tendency; and those of subtler sensibility gradually become more aware of it. Steiner did not try to circumvent this process. Instead he took it seriously as an intrinsic part of artistic endeavour as long as it is encompassed by an aesthetic capacity which he calls "humour". This does not so much refer to our usual understanding of the term but to an ability to see, as they are, opposites, contradictions, things that mutually exclude each other – a death-like disintegration – but at the same time to integrate them in a superordinate realm, to "raise" them and know they have been reconciled. Thus in the lecture already mentioned on 15 February 1918 in Munich ¹², Steiner says:

V "[...] In the soul both of the creative artist and the beholder a process of deadening and then re-enlivening through humour must always be accomplished."

With this passage Steiner suggests that the deadening quality that enters perception through thinking consciousness cannot be circumvented or avoided but instead can itself be integrated into the process of aesthetic experience without it losing its quality. Humour here is an aesthetically significant capacity to perceive what is contradictory, oppositional and fragmented in the world but at the same time to see beyond it to a totality in which opposites have not vanished but have been encompassed. If we can only see the contradictory nature of the world without an intimation of the superordinate unity, we become cynics or tragic figures; and if we do not take the contradictions seriously, we succumb to quixotic illusions.

In this characterisation Steiner is pointing to subtleties at work in the process that unfolds in the soul of the creative artist and the aesthetic beholder. This is the true locus of aesthetic experience. This quality too is one that people have increasingly become aware of in developments in the visual arts in the 20th century – by no means only explicitly in humorous, comic or bizarre elements but in an increasing sense of the inner necessity of conveying contradictory experience as such in art rather than smoothing it over or ignoring it. To view and enjoy art we need this reflex conceptualising, identifying and distancing thinking which is only raised into “humour” if the disintegrating power that is immediately triggered can be integrated into a totality with our perceptions. This is not simply a given but must be drawn forth as actively invoked humour.

These powers active in perception of the sense world need to be raised increasingly into our awareness so as to unfold the artistic potential inherent in sense perceptions. Here it is not sense perceptions themselves that must be raised into the light of consciousness as in the case of the bodily senses; in the ordinary five senses and the upper senses, instead, our thinking and judging activity prevents the unfolding of their potential, and this begins already with our judgements about what is good or bad art, what is legitimate or not. Steiner was acutely aware of this, as shown by the following quotation, on 3 July 1917 ¹³:

VI [...] The most curious thing occurs in human life in fact in these disputes about what is beautiful or ugly, about what is artistically legitimate or not. You see, ultimately this whole judgement about beauty and ugliness, about legitimate or unacceptable art, is rooted in human singularity itself. We will never find a generally valid definition of beauty since nothing more nonsensical could exist than a universally decreed standard of beauty or ugliness. Nothing more nonsensical could exist. One may not like an artwork, and yet one can still engage with the artist’s intentions, enter in to the work that one previously failed to comprehend, and may then find it very beautiful in fact; can realise that one did not like it before only because one failed to understand it.”

This is such a fundamental statement because, in his comments on the sources of artistic creativity, in his account of the laws underlying or immanent in artistic work, in his emphasis on the need to detach ourselves from purely subjective expression in art, Steiner can easily give us the impression that there are eternal laws of beauty that the artist must follow like state-prescribed legislation if he is to produce aesthetically valuable art. But his suggestion that our understanding may be deficient and that remedying this can open doors to aesthetic enjoyment, should by no means be taken as a guarantee of aesthetic experience. He does not, after all, say that we will find something beautiful when we understand it, but that this may be the case. A small but vital distinction!

The erroneous view that there are universally valid laws of beauty leads easily to the idea that a particular style in art is the only one that should be pursued and repeated in future. If such an idea were pursued and realised in the long term, art would separate itself off from the advancing human soul, becoming isolated in itself and thus lapsing from humanity’s ongoing evolution. Humanity’s general process of evolution is not there to serve art but the latter, instead, must serve human life and in the broadest sense seek to improve its condition. The view of many artists that they are producing the only possible true art also becomes the underlying reason for their negative judgement of other artists (or of contemporary

art altogether) which ultimately tells us less about art itself than about the person judging it. Steiner, however, did not succumb to the temptation to impose his own negative judgement on such a stance in turn, but instead illuminated the psychological roots of this outlook. On 15 February 1918 he said in Munich ¹⁴:

VII “[...] Artists generally speaking have nothing good to say about what other artists produce [...] and this is because they sometimes harbour illusions about their own work. Yet the artist has to create out of illusions, and this could be precisely the right thing and give the right impulse for his artistic work.”

Steiner therefore did not moralise superficially about this proclivity for dismissing other artists and art, since he recognised the causes of such dismissal and was able to properly appraise them psychologically. As we saw already in the case of Kandinsky, even outstanding artists do not necessarily have the ability to objectively evaluate other artists and their works. There is a well-known anecdote about Matisse which relates how the painter attended an exhibition and spoke disparagingly of a work by Brancusi. A recently published anthology has recorded sometimes devastating comments of this kind in the literary realm ¹⁵.

One controversial theme in anthroposophically oriented art which repeatedly surfaces especially in judgements and discussions, is whether works by anthroposophically-oriented artists are, or should be, immediately discernible as “anthroposophic art” without further knowledge of the context or artist – in this respect comparable to, say, works from the Impressionist or Cubist school. The exhibition “Aenigma – 100 Years of Anthroposophic Art” has provided a wealth of material on this theme and adequately demonstrates the extent to which the question can only be answered in the negative. Certainly there are plenty of works whose themes suggest they originate in an anthroposphic orientation, and at least as many again whose technique may leads us to suspect something similar.

But in the history of art inspired by Steiner there are also sufficient examples that cannot be identified in this way – often in fact works by artists who personally met Steiner and received important stimulus from him. It should therefore be clear that the criteria of motif and technique ought not to be sufficient to identify “anthroposophic art”. The really interesting thing here, though, are the consequences that follow from this. If not particular motifs and techniques, what constitutes the core and the distinctive nature of anthroposophically inspired art? Fortunately a question-and-answer session in relation to this theme survived, in which Steiner himself clearly suggested that it is not the task of anthroposophically oriented art to reflect spiritual ideas and motifs in the sensory realm according to particular fixed criteria, but that instead artists should primarily seek to approach the “flux of spirit” in their respective material. On 26 August 1921 in Dornach ¹⁶ he leaves the results and outcome of such experience as open as possible.

VIII “[...] Question: Wouldn’t art influenced by anthroposophic teachings have the tendency to become uniform [...] as if produced by a particular school of painting?”

Dr. Steiner: If we comprehend, truly comprehend what can really emerge as art from the spiritual orientation of anthroposophy, it seems to me that this question will not arise at all; we will not be lured into thinking that anthroposophy could ever seek to subject art to

the influence of anthroposophic teachings. An anthroposophic outlook cannot regard art in any other way than as emerging from an experience of the flux of spirit within matter, from living engagement with the material.

[...] I can tell you that my continual wish is that people will use the capacities they have to meet what approaches the soul, and to show and depict what they wish to not in any monotonous way but in great variety and diversity."

There is no scope here for me to trace the development of "anthroposophic art" in the 20th century, with all its branches, sociological processes and interpretational contexts, and unfortunately no history of this field exists as yet. It is not possible, therefore to refer you to an exhaustive bibliography on the subject. The exhibitions and publications by Reinhold Fäth are, though, important milestones on the path of historical elucidation, even if Fäth's views and theoretical appraisal of the phenomenon are certainly debatable.

Evaluation of the art that has arisen since Steiner's time is a subject I would like to conclude today with a last but in my view especially important reference to esoteric deepening of aesthetic perception. Drawing on guidance for esoteric schooling I would like to show how the spiritually evolving human being can, through corresponding exercises and by his own powers, grow able to change, enlarge, refine and deepen the experience of his body and senses. The text can be found in Rudolf Steiner's instructions for esoteric schooling.¹⁷

The quality of positivity that Steiner addresses there is known, of course, but in my experience has scarcely ever been applied to an encounter with modern art. This may be because, in all other accounts of Rudolf Steiner's schooling of cognition, this quality is scarcely ever related so directly as here to resulting capacities of refined perception of one's own being and of one's spatial surroundings.

IX In the fourth month the new exercise we should adopt is that of positivity. This means seeking what is good, fine, beautiful etc. in all experiences, beings, people and things. This quality of the soul is best characterised in a Persian legend about Christ Jesus. One day when he was walking along with his disciples, they saw a dead dog lying by the roadside, in an advanced state of decay and putrefaction. All the disciples turned aside from this unpleasant sight. Only Christ Jesus stopped, looked thoughtfully at the dog and said: What beautiful teeth the creature has! Where the others saw only something repulsive, he sought beauty. In the same way the esoteric pupil must try to find something positive in every phenomenon and every person or creature.

If he does so he will soon notice that a beauty lies hidden beneath the surface of something ugly; that even a criminal conceals good within him and that the divine soul lives too in the person of a lunatic. This is not to say that we should call black white, and white black. But there is a difference between judging another with our personal predilections of sympathy and antipathy, or instead lovingly entering into someone or something else, into the life that is different from ours and continually asking: How is it that this other is like this and acts in this way?

By its very nature, such a point of view seeks to help what is imperfect to improve rather than merely criticising and finding fault. To object that many people's circumstances



necessitate them judging or criticising others is irrelevant here, for if this is the case it means that the person in question cannot undergo a proper esoteric schooling. There are indeed many circumstances that do not allow people to pursue esoteric schooling sufficiently. Here there is no point in impatiently demanding that, despite this, we should make progress which is only possible under certain conditions.

Someone who consciously attends to the positive in all his experiences for a month will gradually notice that the following feeling slips inside him: it is as if his skin grew permeable in all directions and his soul opens to all kinds of hidden and subtle processes in his surroundings of which he was previously completely unaware. This is precisely what is involved here: combating the lack of attention that exists in every person towards subtle things of this kind.

Once you notice that the feeling described is present in the soul like a kind of bliss, you should try to direct it in thought towards the heart, and from there let it stream up to the eyes, and from there out into the space before and around you. You will notice that this gives you an intimate relationship to this space. You learn to regard a part of your surroundings as something that belongs to you. A great deal of concentration is needed for this exercise; and above all acknowledgement that everything tempestuous, violent, vehement and emotional will have a wholly destructive effect on the mood described here. The exercises of previous months should continue alongside this as before.

With these thoughts I would like to conclude, for now, my reflection on sense perception as the source of art.

I wanted to show not only the extent to which, at the beginning of the 20th century, Rudolf Steiner was able to prefigure developments that would enduringly inform modern art, but also and especially how he provided foundations for our understanding of many phenomena in 20th century art which are connected with a broadened sensory scope and an expansion of self-perception. In his view, this understanding should always be closely allied with the will to engage with contemporary art. It is quite clear that Steiner did not want artists to close themselves off from contemporary art because of perceptions and judgements arising from their anthroposophic orientation. On the contrary, he thought they should engage with it with deeper understanding, intensified capacities of perception and reflective tolerance. And thus he not only made important contributions to the understanding of art and the self-evaluation of the spiritually-oriented artist, but provided insights that today can still point us futurewards because they are far from being exhausted.

Many thanks!

- 1 GA 271, not available in English
- 2 C. R. Halfen, 'Entwicklungslinien in der Graphik Rudolf Steiners', in: *Stil* 4/2005-6, p.
- 3 Answer to a question from the audience after a lecture on Art in Dornach, 26th August 1921 (GA 77a)
- 4 Most evidently in the forms of the corridor entrance at the east end of the East Rotunda.
- 5 Some consider that the 1914 design for a large villa by Fritz Kaldenbach (1887- 1918) not only shows the resemblance of certain details to Steiner's second Goetheanum but might even have been an influence on him. However such people must either be ignorant of the whole developmental context of Steiner's buildings in Dornach or have intentionally overlooked them. Nor has it been explained how Steiner could have seen Kaldenbach's design for a building that was not built. The only design by Kaldenbach ever realized was the Seck mill and machine factory in Dresden.
- 6 GA 271. Not available in English
- 7 Rudolf Steiner, 'Der Budapester Internationale Kongress der Föderation Europäischer Sektionen der Theosophischen Gesellschaft.' In: *Mitteilungen für Mitglieder der Deutschen Sektion der Theosophischen Gesellschaft*, reprint Dornach 1999, p. 125.
- 8 Kandinsky, *Recollections*
- 9 GA 271. Not available in English.
- 10 In the lecture "Goethe as Father of a New Aesthetics" (1888) Steiner says: "Beauty is a sensory reality that appears like an idea." The lecture is available in English online at: <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA271/English/RSPC1922/18881109p01.html>
- 11 GA 158. Not available in English.
- 12 GA 271. Not available in English.
- 13 GA 176, lecture 5. This does not appear to be available in English.
- 14 GA 271. Not available in English.
- 15 Jörg Drews (ed.), *Dichter beschimpfen Dichter*, 2nd edition, Frankfurt a.M., 2006.
- 16 GA 77b. Not available in English.
- 17 *Seelenübungen*, GA 267 p. 57. English: *Soul Exercises. Word and Symbol Meditations 1903-1924*. Anthroposophic Press 2015

Peter Ferger

Remarks on Installation as an Art Form

The Ascension Conference of the Visual Arts Section at the Goetheanum for the first time took on as its main theme the new (and already no longer the very new) modes of art, above all Installations. What I experienced there has condensed into the following observations and thoughts.

In his introductory lecture Roland Halfen spoke amongst other things of expanding the sphere of our observation connecting to our new art forms like Installation and Performance. Why is that so? It appears that we are awakening to a new resonance with the world around us. We observe something in us that grips us, but leaves the world of our ideas by the wayside, that appears to have a soul, but is different to any life of soul we have known to date. It is more a kind of openness of soul into which, above all, the four physical senses work playfully on one another through the sense of sight. It has no desire to lead us within ourselves, but rather holds us within the world of perception. If we have experienced up to now how we returned from observing into our internal world, it now appears that we have to learn to experience by remaining outside ourselves and keep to observation.

Should in fact such an extended power of perception come to humanity, then it would not be given to all human beings at the same time. There would be some precursors, others would be "in process", some others would notice only a certain restlessness (these would probably be the ones most receptive towards the IT world, especially if they are young), and finally there would be those who perceive in the traditional manner, and for whom this type of art is simply (of necessity) irritating nonsense. A social constellation through which we should not allow ourselves to become divided! One might then understand why also anthroposophical artists create this kind of art - because they perceive things in this way - and we should feel gratitude towards them for doing so. For through them we become part of this process of expansion and have the opportunity to grasp what it is all about.

Installation - something that has been placed into space. Into which space? At first it appears to be the commonplace three-dimensional space. A table laid for coffee could also be seen as an installation, also a household with its furnishings, or an entire house, and the process of its construction would be a Performance. This is what our reason would suggest, but it would be mistaken - for one is dealing with a phenomenon that reason cannot grasp.

It is mostly sculptors that create Installations. It makes me reflect: When the first Installations were attempted at the Alanus-Hochschule there were no longer any real sculptures. The plastic form that appears to us as living growth, and which we valued so highly, was no longer to be found in anyone's work. Instead merely physical bodies, sometimes geometric, sometimes reminding one of the casing around a motor. Does Installation perhaps need the same forces that play between the physical body and the etheric body, out of which plastic forms are also produced, only in a quite different manner. Are these two art forms mutually exclusive? Besides this, Installation has more in common with Painting. For it gathers that which it has to show within a space just as Painting gathers what belongs to it within the boundaries of its surface. A reversal takes place here. What representational painting shows is colour brought into form: A chair, a vase, the embroidery on a quilt are first and foremost colours, applied in such a way as to replicate the appearance of the objects once again. These objects or images had to go through the process of dissolution in the elemental colour in order to become the picture that seems just like the chosen object. Installation

deals with similar objects (one could just as well paint them all) but these cannot become elemental. They remain in the same form as they have been gathered. What happens, albeit mostly subconsciously, as a kind of rebirth in painting, is denied the Installation. What does it possess instead? It can transform things, manipulate them to the point where they are barely recognisable. But it can't show something like Dali's clock, that melts and flows away. Painting arises through the process of becoming of the things depicted, sculpture in a sense imitates the creation of the living body, Installation comes about through the ordering of things in space, the things that carry the destiny they bring with them. In principle, what one sees in an Installation is a kind of spring of becoming within the traditional arts and a kind of autumn of the perceptible. In all three art forms these three things and their mutual relationships can be explained. But also here there are differences. Where a painted picture is often constructed in such a manner that its interpretation (often identical with the painting's concept) becomes evident (should the picture be based on such a concept), it remains open in an Installation. Each observer can find his or her own interpretation. And where it remains static in the picture, so that we might ask how it has been conceived, we gain the impression that an Installation arises out of a sequence of preconceived movements. This implies that picture and sculpture, which collect and accomplish a process of creation within themselves, turn towards the human being in general, inasmuch as he is in possession of a body and a soul; the Installation becomes a place of individualised destiny which begins to take effect after it has become an image of this process of coming into being. The arts live in different worlds: Painting and Sculpture live in creation, Installation in deconstruction (By comparison: While the plant is growing, it metamorphoses to the point of flowering. ; from the point of pollination onwards the transition seems to succumb to decomposition.

This therefore is what happens within the space of an Installation: Deconstructing, destiny, action. The space is that of everyday life - the scientific conception of integrated space of the 19th century. But there is something else also present in this space, something it adds to everyday life. One can be struck by the thought that all of the different conceptions of space in art, in the sense that the relationships between the malleable core and its surrounding in sculpture, between flat surface and depth in painting were of a formal nature. What enters the space of an installation has more of the psyche, rather than feeling. The constellation of the different elements creates a common atmosphere, but that which is common is not a picture - although it can be photographed. Forming a picture is the capacity of the sense of sight, which already has a tendency towards the knowledge senses but in this case it is the body senses that are addressed, obviously all four at the same time and working together with one another. This might well be the reason that one experiences what is in reality the static Installation as if it had just been placed there because the sense of movement is directly involved. Out of this conglomeration of the senses something new arises. This does not imply knowledge: what that is, what it means, what it is supposed to be communicating, but rather something hitherto unknown: „You are seeing a piece of the world in front of you; this world, however is at the same time a quite different one from what you perceive“ - beyond all ideas, which have conditioned our consciousness. For any sense perceptible object we form but a single concept; as representation it can be observed from a hundred different aspects. Are we able to experience this completely different world? This inexplicable element that is so connected to our destiny in the world, is also present within the space. The space carries it within itself and thereby shares its suffering.

Let's turn to Cornelia Falkenhahn's installation : On a light surface on the floor some convenient, longish, naturally coloured cardboard boxes, some still closed, others open, inside each a

white egg bigger than the egg of an ostrich, carefully cast in plaster, while other cartons have been emptied and thrown about, amongst them egg shells cut in half, bits of plaster of Paris, parts of a net - has perhaps someone emptied them without permission, then eclipsed on being discovered...? Behind it, on the wall, a photograph printed on cloth, obscure, cut into vertical strips - explained, it shows the rusty shovel of a front-end loader filled with oyster shells, overgrown by plants that have in the meantime dried and wilted. And should a ventilator blow the photo strips aside, there appears behind it, to the extent that the strips allow, a colourful painting: Leonardo's Anna Selbdritt. In the foreground a piece of the physical world in decay, exploited and cast aside (so that one can proceed similarly elsewhere?). Behind it an old, redundant world of ideas, still moved by emotion, on the foundation of the largely obscured painting - oh yes: the Christian Occident! Could one in any way show the psychological and spiritual situation of our time and our world more aptly, as clear as Picasso's Guernica, only not quite as loud? Yet it does not depict any theme (as does Picasso), but instead a discovery. Perceiving the differentiated situation awakens something in me that already slumbers within. It becomes conscious, understands, or perhaps recognises itself. But that is a subsequent occurrence that closes off the experience of observation, yet at the same time brings the work of art to its climax in that, for myself, it lends individuality.

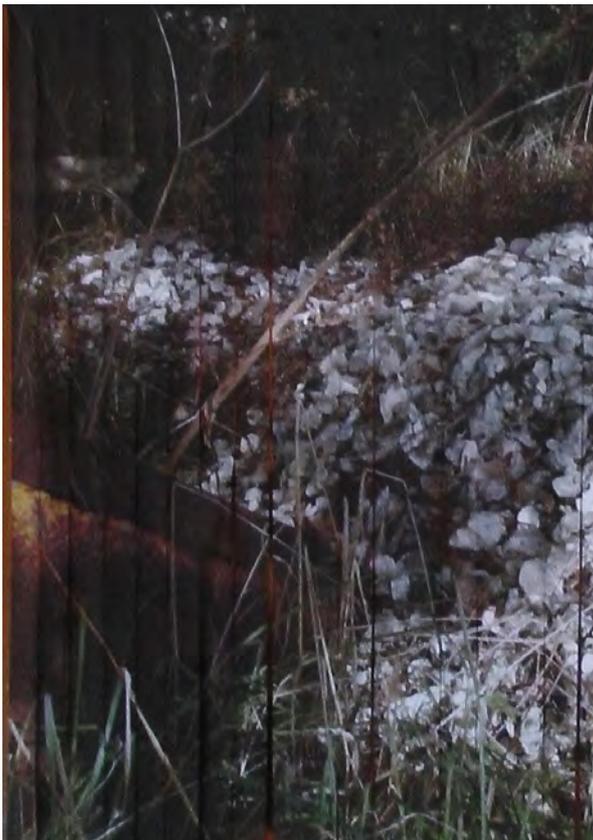
Part of what art is, has passed over to him who was previously the observer. I'd almost say: a work of art holds itself in the state of the embryo. Birth occurs thereafter through the „co-artist“, through each one differently, and anew. That presupposes that the co-artist is able to dive into the world of perception of the original artist. The social question poses itself once again: what happens if he is not able to do this? In that case he cannot become a co-artist and the corresponding part of the work of art that should be his, remains unborn. To date, art has claimed a general validity for all people; is this relationship to become completely individualised? This is not something purely external. One may interpret the eggshells as the discarded sheaths of new life or, should they be broken prematurely, as the prevention of life. But this is simply a thought, which attaches itself subsequently. One might view them as archetypal forms, but there is also nothing formal about it which geometrical art has not mastered long ago. Were they simply lying there at random - no, they lie where the artist has put them. Within this individuality, this uniqueness is certainly hidden and what should come about is the ability to meet. The success of an installation is dependent upon this hidden element coming alive. That also eliminates the possibility of something not being a true Installation, which has, in fact, achieved this aim. Only in the beholding can it be determined that this is the case.

Within the history of Art a point of contact can also be established, namely in the latter half of 19th Century painting. At the time the attempt was made to understand the elements of soul experience and of the secrets of human existence. Connecting to the art of a previous age and hemmed in by the intensity of the prevailing materialism, a form of expression arose that one calls symbolism. This was not what was intended, however. This form of art (eg. of Böcklin) was replaced by Impressionism and in the place of the face as an image of the soul one enjoyed the picture, that painted the light, shadows and reflections of colour. Humans became beings of nature. Later one could distort his stature at will (Picasso).

What had happened to the riddle of the individual? Arthistory always looks at the new, and attempts to predict in the latest style the one that is to come. A history of that which was cut off, was never completed, has yet to be written. The mystery of the human being is a theme that has, apart from a few great spirits, never caught on in modern times.

Above all there is not, and never was, especially not after the long phase of abstract art, any attempt to portray an individual face that has been fashioned by destiny, and that was

not a return to an earlier form of portrait. (a Johannes Thomasius has to date not made his appearance). No one up to now has been able to depict such a human image conceived from within. There remains, therefore, only the possibility of searching for this active „Man of Destiny“ as one, so to speak, that is spread out in the world around. No longer as the example to be depicted, the artist has rather to try and be this person himself. We can observe this role already in Jackson Pollock, who walks over the surface of his painting. Earlier, Cubism had showed the way from the surface of the picture into the actual space and Surrealism had alienated us from this space. Newcomers later began to find objects within actual space. The trail leads through the development of Art to find itself within the Installation.



above: part of Cornelia Falkenhan's installation

Zvi Szir

Nestling, Schimmering, Geometric

A single work from the exhibition <The North in the Goetheanum>

To write about a group exhibition is a thankless pastime. Does one write about its curatorial decisions, about individual works one finds appealing or does one attempt to describe the exhibition as a whole? Why should one choose the latter path? In order to circulate information about art works others haven't seen? Further reports on what we haven't experienced? By contrast, a single piece of work can sometimes be a gateway, through which we can draw closer to an absent work, the spark that ignites a happening in which, in absentia, the work, in our case the painting, it becomes readable, that is audible, how the painting thinks! It is as if we left out the visual-tactile reality of the work, like a continued resounding, an echo of the work, which continues to speak. The choice of works does not represent the exhibition, there is no general opinion given that relates to the works – only a single piece of work, in our case "Qualities of the Square With Red Dominance" by Jörgen Sadolin.

I What do we see: seven soft-edged square planes of colour pressing in on one another tensed between the right and left edges of the painting and that have a vibrating-varying (back)ground. The manner in which the colour planes have been applied is tremulous, shows a brushwork that is more texture than traces of a brush. The lower colour planes give the local tones of colour a glimmer. Thus, glimmering, flat, geometricizing colour planes that press upon and nestle up to one other. Despite the fact that the red, brown, blue, white, rose tones of colour hold one another, the colours have a specific character und a satisfying tonal tension.

II As the title intends to name, to tell me what I am seeing, I leave it aside and simply look. There are also other kinds of title, ones that are a part of the work, or that activate the work, question its validity, contextualise it, but this is not the case here. What then, is the case? I try to find out what it is that affects me through the work. The first striking thing is the tension between the painted colour and the plastic-architectural. Colours and forms, both clear, balanced, both exactly defined according to strength and measure, ask us: What does the form do to the colour, the colour with the form? The picture is awake because it questions, because it permits itself to be questioningly clear. Two such works by Jörgen Sadolin are exhibited, both between the same horizontal brackets on right and left, similarly clear but with a different constellation of colour and form. Thus the question is an active research question, not unique but specifically rephrased time and again. Perhaps it can be stated as follows: Are colours forces that bestow on form the power of action? Are colours the inner strength of form? Is the pressure of the dark red on the right so strong that it is able to bend away the white, blue and then the large light red? Or is it the forms which receive the different qualities of colour? Forms that, like a vessel, like a glass bottle, enable us to sense the colours in their quantities and relationships with one another.

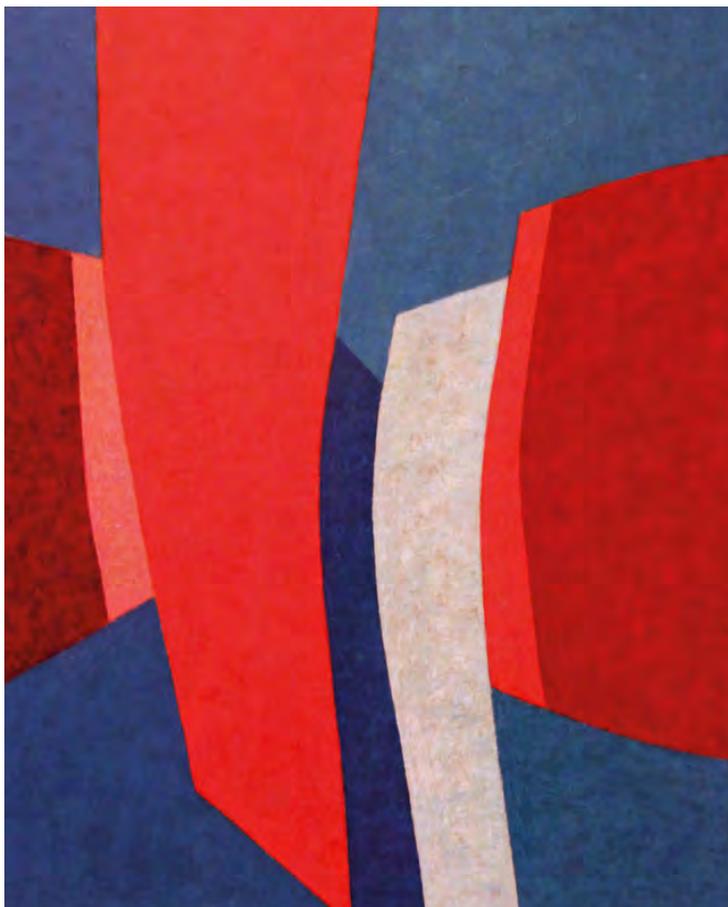
III Geometrically oriented forms in painting are as old as the history of painting itself. We find them in Egyptian murals, in Pompeii, in Persia, Arab and medieval illuminated handwritten texts. Also in architectural backgrounds and spaces since the 14th Century and in special perspective. In pre-modern times geometry has the effect of establishing order in a painting, as the architecture of the picture (sometimes symbolic, but in good art seldom essentially symbolical). Until the early 20th Century there were forms that had colour and those that were given a colour.

Modernism used geometric forms in a variety of ways. Above all, however, to give the colours their freedom of expression: a receding form, which left the colour unburdened by expression, idea and dynamic, free in its quality and intensity. From Paul Klee to Barnett Newman and Ad Reinhardt, until Minimalism and Monochrome, the geometric – and above all the square – was utilised as if this restful form leaves us in peace, in a tranquillity that allows us to see the colour. In a large portion of modern art square forms constitute a kind of retreat of form in deference to colour, the intensity, the pure tones of colour and relationships. The square was used because it was least thought of as a form. In other words: the square was used in painting as the carrier of colour, because the feeling was present that it is the form that has the least tendency to do something, to act or to hide itself, which is precisely because of its inherent meaninglessness.

IV In Jörgen Sadolin's work this is not the case. Here either the forms act on the colours to bend and compress, or the colours do not lie passively within the form at all, but rather fetch what is square out of its passive objectivity, allowing it to expand, to bend and to press. Like a vice the colour planes press in from the edge of the picture. Through compression they create the elongated forms that lie in between. Here we find a conflict between the elements. A clear plastic-sculptural occurrence that the colours themselves do not actually require: like matter between two forces, the pressure is exerted. And confronting it a mature play of colour that could very easily stand up for itself as an independent element. For which the square forms might just be a vessel, a kind of counter form. "Might be" in the event that they were not themselves active. If the forms were not actually engaged in distorting forms, and in the event that this bending, adjoining and compressing did not time and again point to the intensity of colour, of the sculpting force of a particular tone. Confusing. Are colours sculptural forces? Why not?

V Could it be that when Rudolf Steiner referred to Painting as the revelation of the Astral (that is to say, the effect of the Sentient Soul with its bodily counterpart, the Sentient Body) through the living-etheric, he meant precisely this: the manner in which Soul sets the living under pressure and forms it? (GA 275) The human being devoid of soul is altogether harmonious, without pressure, an image of health. Then the soul element takes hold of it. It makes the indentations deeper, fashions the doors of the senses, the seven cavities of the face, the zones of arousal of the body. Just as in Painting, in this case more bound to the materials of the earth, the soul nature, in its plastic transformation of life body and purity of form, expresses itself as the body. Are the psychic realities of colour in the two dimensions of the world of Painting able to lift the spell and reveal fully the sculpture-in-colour, without themselves becoming sculpture, becoming too sculptural? It seems they can.

VI It looks as if plastic and architectural elements such as pressure, force, weight bearing and spanning can be subordinated to painting in order to bring to light the colours in their modelled forces of soul. It looks as if this particular painting thinks. It thinks once more of its relationship to sculptures and buildings. It strives to call forth an astral architecture, in which no form receives or outlines a colour, but simply provides a medium that makes visible the formative activity of colour in its transformation, its bending and breaking, swelling and sinking. Like a translucent medium, which makes the light visible in its actions, so also the forms in painting. They are essential to seeing the actions of colour.



Pictures from left: Jörgen Sadolin, «Viereckqualitäten IV» mit roter Dominanz (Qualities of the Square with red Dominance); impressions from the exhibition; Janne Silvasti, Sehnsuchtsstrand I (coast of longing).

Hannes Weigert

Malerverksted at the Goetheanum

„I really like Arnkjell’s paintings, especially his excellent self portrait, which could also be taken as a study in connection with the „Representative of Man“. But I didn’t know about this before, and so I had the impression Arnkjell had painted a portrait of himself as a spiritual being inspired by deep intuition. Have another look at it. Wouldn’t you agree with me? ¹“

Yes, I also feel that. It is still a mystery that painting can yield such fruit and that Arnkjell had succeeded in letting it appear.

The first Malerverksted Exhibition at the Goetheanum ² was titled: „Riddles“ and Johannes Nilo wrote a text about the mystery of the „I“ and described the Malerverksted as a workshop of the „I“ ³ Since then several paintings from the Malerverksted had been exhibited in the Goetheanum which always focused on the „I“. The „I“ as a creator and something being created at the same time. Reidun Larsen ⁴ demonstrated this in his studies of Steiner’s Eurythmy Figures and also Arnkjell Ruud in the series of his paintings titled „Goetheanum“ ⁵, tentatively seeking, step by step to grasp one’s own self or the guardian - the Guardian of the „I“ and making it visible in a series of paintings.

When the Malerverksted visited the Goetheanum ⁶ for the fourth time, it was a two week’s visit. Arnkjell Ruud, Tor Janicki, Patrick Müllerschön, Johannes und Dawn Nilo used one of the eurythmy rooms in the Schreinerei as their studio. They focussed on studies of Rudolf Steiner’s work: the Goetheanum building, the heating house, the figures of the sculpture group, - man between Lucifer and Ahriman - and on a drawing in which the word „I“ was inscribed ⁷.

There were two Exhibitions in the so-called „Backofen“. The first was called „Øya“ and opened on the 22 July, presenting a series of 13 of 77 paintings by Hannes Weigert ⁸ supplemented by Steiner’s drawing „The dance of the Twelve“ which seem to express the will of the „I“ ⁹. If you follow the „Øya“-series you sense an independent will expressing itself like a „I“-flow of forces effecting each painting and binding them all together - „Only the will that you don’t will expresses the „I““. ¹⁰

The second Malerverksted exhibition ¹¹ was called „Steiner-Studies“ and showed architectural, sculptural, painting and eurythmic designs and sketches by Steiner. Steiner’s own study of the head of the „Representative of Man“ posed the focus point. The paintings are displayed in three rows above each other on high walls. Ruud Larsen’s eurythmy figures filled the upper row: powerful gestures born out of will to express eurythmic speech and soul gestures in a human form. Below, some just leaning against the wall, Arnkjell Ruud’s paintings. They were created out of perception, transcending impressions from the outside world, and letting them emerge with a life of their own. Then there were studies about the so-called „atmospheric nature“. Tor Janicki seems to dream his way into the imaginative, manifesting feelings, and they appear as though one sees them with physical eyes.

Does that mean that I see myself in these pictures as a spiritual being? May be that is too early. These pictures are as yet unfinished, but I contribute to their completion by allowing them to evoke in me a spiritual being. In some of the pictures - the only ones in the exhibition



Malerverksted Vidaråsen, Norwegen

that were not inspired by Rudolf Steiner's sketches – I see a head from behind and hand painting it.¹² Under this hand a face emerges. When the first head seems to leave the picture, the second face transforms itself into one that materialises in my mind. My attention is drawn to the actual painting, as though I were present, as though I were the painter and at the same time that which is being painted. As long as I keep this sensation awake I look at the other paintings in the exhibition – like the fragments of moonrise – and become aware that these present themselves in a different way than before. They don't depict but reveal themselves in the way in which they were painted. They unfold as the trail of the „I“.

Barnett Newman spoke of the self as the subject of painting¹³. Every brushstroke on the canvas is like manifesting oneself in the picture. The one who paints forms a unity with the dawn line. And Newman often only draws just one line. Therefore it is not surprising that there are so many white areas in this exhibition. It is like learning to walk, step by step, stroke by stroke visualising oneself as a spiritual being.

Hannes Weigert
Malerverksted Vidaråsen, Norwegen

First published in „Das Goetheanum“ 37-2015

- 1 Lars Krüger, E-mail sent to Hannes Weigert (1.2.2015) about the postcards painted by Arnkjell Ruud, a self portrait and six studies connected with Rudolf Steiner's representative of man, published by the Malerverksted. Most evidently in the forms of the corridor entrance at the east end of the East Rotunda.
- 2 Rüdiger Grimm invited the Malerverksted to exhibit in Autumn 2012.
- 3 Johannes Nilo: Rätsel der Malerei, (The enigma of painting) in Das Goetheanum 48-2012
- 4 Jasminka Bogdanovic, Malerverksted: Rudolf Steiners Eurythmiefiguren painted by Reidun Tyvold Larsen, Seelenpflege 1-2014
- 5 Arnkjell Ruud, Hannes Weigert, Goetheanum. Paintings from the Malerverksted, Seelenpflege 1-2015
- 6 Malerverksted at the Goetheanum, Studio and Exhibition (20.7. - 2.8.2015) in cooperation with the Goetheanum-Archive in context of the conference „The North in the Goetheanum - the Goetheanum in the North“.
- 7 Rudolf Steiner, Pastel drawing: „Der Mensch im Geiste“ (Man in the spiritual world) (1923).
- 8 Hannes Weigert, Øya, www.hannes-weigert.com
- 9 Rudolf Steiner, 30.12.1921, quoted in Hilde Raske, Das Farbenwort.
- 10 Rudolf Steiner, From the contents of esoteric classes. Aus den Inhalten der esoterischen Stunden I (GA266/1), S. 359.
- 11 Torsten Steen, Steinerstudien, Das Goetheanum 36-2015
- 12 Arnkjell Ruud (together with Hannes Weigert), Malerbilder, Malerverksted Vidaråsen 2015.
- 13 Barnett Newman: "The self, terrible and constant, is for me the subject of painting", zitiert nach Bernard Jacobsen: Robert Motherwell, p. 20

Summer Seminar from 28 August to 4 September 2015

The Language of Form in Nature and in Architecture

The 4 Ethers as a Bridge between Spirit and Matter

Persons from different countries attended this year's Summer Seminar of the Visual Arts Section, offering the most varied activities like Architecture, Painting and Sculpture at the Goetheanum.

The theme centred around the question of how to express in architectural forms what corresponds to the original task of the design, something in which becomes manifest the living being, exerting a moral effect. Referring to the significance of such a theme, Rudolf Steiner said during the opening ceremony of the art studio on 17 June 1914: "... true healing from evil to goodness will for human souls in future come about when art sends that spiritual fluid substance into human souls and into human hearts that these human souls and hearts, when they let this fluid work on them, from what has arisen in architectural sculpture and other forms – that then, should they be inclined towards lying, they will cease to lie; that, if they tended to cause trouble, they will cease to disrupt the peace of their fellow human beings. Buildings will begin to speak." (*Wege zu einem neuen Baustil* (GA 286), Rudolf Steiner Verlag, Dornach 1982, S.64).

In confronting the task deriving from these indications of Rudolf Steiner, the director of the Seminar, Johannes G. Schuster, for a long time researched the etheric forces that work in Nature on the form of everything that lives and through which the spiritual manifests in the physical. In doing so he relies above all on the work of the medical doctor Ernst Marti who, following an indication of Ita Wegman, devoted himself, among other things, to the research of the etheric.





The focal point of the Seminar were the lectures of Johannes G. Schuster, both about the four Ethers (Warmth Ether, Light Ether, Tone Ether and Life Ether), their formative tendencies and qualities as well as their relationship to the four elements (Fire, Air, Water, Earth), to the development of the Earth and the creative process of the human being.

Following the lectures, what had been heard was explained and deepened in conversation with the entire group as well as in smaller discussion groups. Practical artistic exercises accompanied the process. Above all during the sculpture classes, the various different qualities of form could be experienced.

In the final plenum, as well as in the intense discussions that took place during the breaks, it became clear that, for numerous participants, the Seminar was a strong impulse to occupy oneself more intensively with these core questions and to perhaps approach it in future seminars also from other perspectives.

The Seminar week also found a valuable augmentation through the artistic appreciation within the Goetheanum as well as in the Goetheanum's surrounding gardens and the house de Jaager, under the expert guidance of Marianne Schubert and Pieter van der Ree.

Painting with plant colours

Plant colours are something special, precious and rare, but they can be taken seriously, because it was one of Rudolf Steiner's prime concerns to use these exquisite colours for the priming and painting of the motives inside the dome of the first Goetheanum.

There are gifted painters who claim that everyone should be able to paint with every painting substance and - perhaps, somewhat arrogantly, look down on colours that require elaborate manufacturing and are a challenge to handle. At first sight one hardly sees the difference, till you begin to sense the effects.

The producer of these colours has to undergo several trials, before he becomes a devotee, which he must, because there is no either or as a consequence. It is obvious that there cannot be any mass production because the base substances needed for the painting media and the pulverised colour material vary from year to year, and so the formulas and procedures always have to be adjusted.

The Visual Arts Section invited a group of specially interested people to discuss the „actual situation and the future of plant colours“ on 11 and 12 July 2015. Uwe Janke related the recent history of plant colour manufacture and showed how Günter Meier's dedicated work at the Goetheanum had had its effects and demonstrated the development of the primer. (This is important for anyone who paints frescoes). Uwe Janke then told us that the problems with the First Goetheanum's primer had been resolved and that the procedure had been patented. A stable primer is now available to every painter.

The real highlight of Günter Meier's work must be seen in having prepared the plant colours and their emulsions for the ceiling paintings of the renovated hall of the second Goetheanum. This resulted in a huge step towards public acknowledgement at the turn of the millennium. Günter Meier crossed the threshold on 13 May 2003 and since then the painting substances have become rare again. Winfried Johannes Zastrow had been researching independently for many years before his work was widely appreciated. One of his fields of attention focused on the production of Indigo Blue from glastum or dyers woad, another on a series of seminars and publications.

It had been a desirable ideal for painters and plant colour manufacturers to come together, and it was a painter's goal and a deep wish that this impulse may serve the Goetheanum by inaugurating such a meeting.

Robert Wroblewski. I would like to thank you and we are truly happy that the work with plant colours can be shared and that research can be continued.

Events

Visual Art Section

SEMINARYS / WORKSHOPS / DISCUSSIONS

22. – 24.01.2016

2. Werkstattgespräch: Der II. Goetheanumbau

Forschungsbeiträge von Alexander Schaumann, Peter Ferger und Henning Schulze-Schilddorf

Mit Betrachtungsübungen und Besuch des Planarchivs;

Beginn: Freitag 19.30 Uhr, Ende Sonntag 12.30 Uhr; Anmeldung über die Sektion

08. – 10.04.2016

3. Werkstattgespräch: Der II. Goetheanumbau

Referent: Pieter van der Ree, Peter Ferger

22. – 24.04.2016

Pflanzenfarbenlabor

Kurs zur Farbenherstellung und Anwendung

05. – 08.05.2016

Sources of Art IV

Reports and practical works of painters with Hannes Weigert, Marianne Wachberger und Alexander Schaumann

03. – 05.06.2016

Pflanzenfarbenlabor

Kurs zur Farbenherstellung und Anwendung

18. – 23.07.2016

Formensprache der Bildekräfte im Zusammenhang mit den Sternkreiszeichen

Sommerseminar mit Johannes Schuster

09. – 11.09.2016

1. Werkstattgespräch zum Bekleidungsdesign

mit Heide Nixdorff (findet evtl. in Berlin statt)

17. – 20.11.2016

Sources of Art V

Conference of the Section

MONTAGSGESPRÄCHE „Künstler stellen sich vor“

18.01. / 15.02. / 07.03. / 18.04. / 23.05. / 20.06.2016

1 x im Monat Montags von 18.30 – 19.45 Uhr

EXHIBITIONS

14.11.2015 – 10.01.2016

Archibald Bajorat und sein Schüler Benjamin Weder

Unter anderem Bilder aus dem Kalewala-Epos von Archibald Bajorat

Öffnungszeiten: täglich 8 – 22 Uhr

30.01. – 13.03.2016

Resilienz Biophilia

Die Kraft urbaner Gärten; Projekte von Herbert Dreiseitl

Öffnungszeiten: täglich 8 – 22 Uhr

09.04. – 08.06.2016

Malerei

Tagungsteilnehmer (Quellen der Kunst IV) stellen ihre Arbeiten vor.

Öffnungszeiten: täglich 8 – 22 Uhr

04.06. – 04.09.2016

Werden

Werke von Gerhard Helmers, Bildhauer

Öffnungszeiten: täglich 8 – 22 Uhr; Vernissage: Freitag, 03. Juni um 18 Uhr

24.09. – 23.10.2016

„Peinture naive“ – aus der Geisteswissenschaft

Bilder von Sieglinde Hauer

Öffnungszeiten: täglich 8 – 22 Uhr; Vernissage: Freitag, 23. September um 18 Uhr

CABINET EXHIBITIONS

17.11.2015 – 31.01.2016

Sophie Stinde (1853–1915)

„Im Zeichen der Weisheit“ zum 100. Todestag

01.02. – 29.04.2016

Ludwig Jacobowski (1868–1900)

ein Freund Rudolf Steiners

30.04. – 15.09.2016

Georg Goelzer

Leiter des anthroposophischen Studienjahres am Goetheanum von 1980 bis 1999,

Bildender Künstler und Schriftsteller

For further information please contact the Visual Art Section:

Tel.: +41 61 706 41 37 . Fax: +41 61 706 44 01 . E-Mail: sbk@goetheanum.ch . www.goetheanum.org