

An Encounter with Reality

Ingrid Pröller

One could lose oneself in Ingrid Pröller's image worlds, dive into them, experience the flying movements, vanish in the shimmering branches or just swim and float for a while through the world of the saturated, flowing colours. Just the cinemascope-like formats, wide canvases, seem to invite one to these excursions, to "entering" the paintings. In contrast to the western civilising story of the alienation of humans from nature, the painter prefers to refer to the east-Asian cultural context, where a contemplative gliding over of the artistic subject (the painter) into the world of the object portrayed (the landscape painting) has long appeared as the central idea.

It appears to be a different matter with the body images. The sport and cultural studies scholar Gunter Gebauer once called it "movement as emotional performance" and stated that it is a question of the moment of sporting heroism that we often see in great brilliance and detail in technical pictures. With Pröller it is not descriptions of people or moments, but in her pictures an "emotional background" of colour develops, out of which the sportsmen and women emerge – focused on typical poses and attitudes between exertion and triumph (Gebauer). But at this moment the landscape and body images recombine: one time it is the size and the enchanting colours and motifs that draw us into the pictures as if into a lost space of the relationship between nature and people. Another time it is about fundamental human emotions such as fear, lust, desire, instinct etc., to where sport is something that pulls emotions into the present by means of movement.

Ingrid Pröller has long worked on the ability to put herself into these worlds that are so different in content and motif. "The sporting subjects in the works reflect my biographical relationship to the subject of sport and society", says Pröller. "As a ten-year-old I was a serious track-and-field athlete (middle-distance running). My meanwhile as well as art critical relationship with the phenomenon of sporting culture motivated me to study sport. I have also taught in a five-year teaching post in both disciplines... furthermore I am interested in analogies and synergies between art and sport, starting in antiquity up to the social phenomenon of the 20th and 21st centuries."

But apart from these formative influences – and those during childhood in the countryside with many forays through fields and woods – one finds numerous other areas of interest and sources of inspiration. For example a great passion for art history, preferably explored in "fragmentary travels through Europe". In the philosophical and literary field she admires among others Gernot Böhme (*Ethik leiblicher Existenz*, 2008, *Ethics in Context*, 2009), Slavoj Žižek and Peter Sloterdijk – to name just a few.

She answers the much-loved question of the relationship between abstraction and figuration pragmatically and unperturbed: "The question is not important for me – quite simply, what needs abstraction will be painted in that way (e.g. landscape, allusion to ideas etc.), what needs figuration will be painted in that way (people, faces, various natural details etc.). I don't see any conflict there! On the contrary, both can stand on their own and also go together – the appropriate application is in the nature of the thing itself."

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