

The Landscape of Things

Those who are familiar with the colour painting of the Mülheim artist know that her seemingly object-free, abstract compositions of colour space and colour temperature are always based on an object-related reality. Often, landscapes or natural-looking objects embedded into the landscape inspire the artist to deal with the atmosphere in both a concrete and abstract way via the medium of painting. Thus, colour as an image and main character of the painting always remains defined in a relation to an extra-worldly reality always imparting a concrete structure to Vera Herzogenrath's paintings in addition to the freedom of her brush stroke. This structure makes them tangible and concrete.

In the works of the last months, however, Vera Herzogenrath developed her motifs mostly arising from the world, nature and environment with a new view on the phenomena of things which can also be specified by individual objects. Here, the 'thing of interest' is a view of approach and nearness to nature. Based on the great abstraction of landscape paintings, in her latest works branches, trees or stones appear like traces in the colour space of painting. The objects are given a 'blow up' by the artist, a microscopical magnification. Consequently, there are the elements of abstraction and the autonomy of colour that become effective again.

What is the difference to the preceding paintings that are closer oriented towards scenic aspects? With a focused gaze to the

things that make up the world and nature the composition of the imaging gets more extensive, the colour spaces get more defined and, arising from the composition, allow a stronger contrasting of spaces and colours in a painting. Portrait format and verticalities also place the paintings in a new relation to the room in which they are presented. The tonal value and the colour temperature Vera Herzogenrath uses to compose and weight her paintings gain in contrast and tension and set the surface of the paintings in motion and vibration absorbing, as it were, the spectator in the movement of the colour schemes. And yet – as in the paintings with a stronger reference to landscapes as well – the boundaries between objective recognisability and pure abstraction are also blurred particularly regarding her recent works in which she turns to more concrete things.

In a sense, the recognizability of individual objects even enhances the quality of abstraction of the landscapes since here we immediately experience the contrast and the transition from real to concrete, from objective to abstract while viewing a painting. Vera Herzogenrath transfers the world of things into a superordinate world of abstraction where the microscopic view into the detail shows the way everything repeats and reflects itself in the macroscopic world, albeit with another intensity and a differently structured picture-inherent atmosphere.

The flat macro structure in view, landscape as a subject of art has indeed developed

in a way that militates against observations of detail due to its long-range effect. Considering this, the examination of the concrete things Vera Herzogenrath turns to in her recent paintings seems to constitute an analogous relationship. Since here she delves, likewise militating against the observations of detail, into the microcosm of things which develops the same characteristics from the close-up view as landscape does from the distant view.

Macro turns into micro, micro turns into macro and the elementary differences that are apparent in the change from landscape to object in Vera Herzogenrath's paintings have to do with the possibilities to extend the formats and to work with a much more detached colourfulness contradicting the scenic conditions and requiring a different and a more extensive repertoire. In the context of an object-like consideration of the world all kinds of colourfulness, all formats and all colour climates offer the possibility to further realize the artistic composition.

In Vera Herzogenrath's earlier landscape paintings we have perceived and defined an incompleteness representing an opening for the beholders to get their own scenic access to the world. To the same extent this incompleteness is preserved in the paintings that are much more oriented at objects and things. Furthermore, it offers the possibility of an open and discursive access to painting that can now that the viewing is object-determined, make use of greater design possibilities – also as far

as the formats are concerned. The focus being on the magnification of the things opens up an almost unlimited cosmos of possibilities, formats, colour compositions and structures in which the artist can thus revel while developing her paintings.

Perhaps it would be helpful at this point to examine Vera Herzogenrath's paintings from the musical point of view. She deals with the colours as one does with notes and sequences and again and again she composes new sound and tone compositions keeping ready a great deal of possible associations and accesses for the viewers. Extending her themes from landscape to the objective world Vera Herzogenrath has changed, as it were, from classical music to twelve-tone music. The possibilities of variations offer the viewers a real sound-cosmos of pictures, sounding tones and formats.

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