

“Global“ – Painting and Photography; a Dialogue

The death of painting has often been prophecised but this has only served to regularly invigorate the medium. However, one also can't speak of painting as an anthropological constant, that exists independently of history, or as simply the sum of its self-assessment. This is an argument put forward by Johannes Meinhardt in his book, “Das Ende der Malerei und die Malerei nach dem Ende der Malerei (The End of Painting and Painting After the End of Painting“). In the current age of mass communication it is hard to talk meaningfully about the meaning of painting without considering its relationship to other media such as photography, video and graphic art.

With the invention of photography, painting was freed of its responsibility to mimic and reproduce reality. It wasn't until widespread digital use became the norm that photography has undergone a similar shift. In the age of new media our experience of reality has been altered. The visual world is no longer immediate, primal and innocent, but mediated. Included in this are pictures in the mass media as well as pictorials of artworks in books and projected images. Strictly applied, this would mean a painted canvas is also a mediated form of the visual as it requires a particular technique, brush and colour. In painting there is however a artisan act of production that remains visible unlike in the World of high-gloss photography and computer displays.

Monika Humm carries on this discussion in her new series “Global“. A series of photographs of haulage containers taken in container depots and port facilities is the basis for her exploration. The steel behemoths stand like towers and form an impenetrable wall for the viewer. Humm has reinforced this illusion to the point that the structures remind of an abstract picture. The comparison is fair if you take into account Monika Humm's older work. Layers of colours and glazes build up to a complete picture. Stability is brought to these pieces by a grid-like structure of strong brushstrokes over the surface of the picture.

In her new series “Global“, Humm has bound her photography to her painting. Selected excerpts of pictures are laminated onto wood panels on which to allow the painting to react. In the first pictures of the series there is little more than a rhythm that is structured and brought to life by the painting. Thick layers of

colour cover this to leave only a hint of photographic background. The composition is dominated by gestural, dynamic brushstrokes and traces of thin dripped colour. But more and more the photography forms an almost equal space next to the paint. The grid-like structure works simultaneously as a window that facilitates a view to the photographic background.

Monika Humm has been illuminating the relationship between surface and space, variety and unity, objectivity and abstraction, for many years. In her series, "Global" she captures the fleeting nature of photography in a structure of painting without losing the lightness of the former. Painting and photography sit together, not as rivals that fight for the viewers attention, but engaging in a heated debate.

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(Translation by Sergio Anton Poggio)