

Amelie von Wulffen

At the cool table

24.1. – 14. 3. 2015

Amelie von Wulffen's comic book encounter with Goya ("Am kühlen Tisch," Koenig 2014), in the course of which she and the Enlightenment visionary attend the opening of her exhibition "Amelie von Wulffen, Der Ruf der Nachtigall" in Hanover, displays its intellectual wit in the intuitive use of enlightened "modernity's" conception of the artist. With ironic and self-reflective ease, the artist skillfully employs the "theatrum mundi" of historical perspective shift in the here and now. Embodying the figure of the contemporary artist, she incorporates herself into the historico-cultural "intellectual space" surrounding the origin story of modernity in general – on irreverently casual terms with Goya, she succeeds in contemporizing respectively updating a historical artistic figure, that grand master of painting and drawing on the subject of human cruelty and oppression. "Hey Goya, look at this cute artist, he made such a nice installation, crazy." He is skeptical: "You think so? I dunno." On the way to Hanover in the comic book, the artist constantly worries whether her exhibition has even been installed. Goya urges: "You need to come to Hanover finally, people are waiting." When it turns out that the exhibition really has not been installed, Goya wants to go on to Braunschweig. "Braun-Schweig." says the artist, "What a perverted name".

(Herbert Lachmayr)

Francisco de Goya serves as a somewhat unusual, yet faithful companion in satirical episodes in which Amelie von Wulffen describes life as an artist as a tenuous situation in a perfidious arts scene, marked by traumatic experiences and encounters. Amelie von Wulffen created the comic book for the 2013 exhibition of the same name at Portikus in Frankfurt. The drawings are successively projected onto the wall, complementing the paintings with the addition of a substantive dimension. This narrative is framed in the exhibition space by the static paintings. Conversely, however, the story also serves as a framing device for the pictures, lending a fictional air to the exhibition as a whole.

The drama of the event evolves into an ambivalent *mise-en-scène* with Amelie von Wulffen's painted chairs: Van Gogh's face glowers head-on from a backrest, the seat features a seascape with sailboat. The chair is clearly occupied in every sense. Artist and viewer are relegated to paying their respects in standing – or not to.

The artistic means of expression employed by Amelie von Wulffen are classical – painting and drawing as well as distinct iconographic references to art history. Her manipulation of the same is both contemporary and idiosyncratic. Their historicity is evoked and placed in tense opposition, resulting in the development of an oddly visionary presence.

The paintings invoke a variety of images and quotes from the recent history of painting; fragments of still lifes, impressionist landscapes, or self-portraits can be recognized and at times clearly identified. The process of appropriating subjects in the painterly (re)production appears both unfinished and already ruptured by a distinctive painterly world that breaks into the picture plane of its own accord, bifurcating the original narrative, disturbing, enriching, or attacking it.

The discernible representations are countered with unmitigated rough abstraction. Mimetic images, gestural informalism, transparent application, and forceful impasto overlap in layers. A whole range of painting styles crash together, burst apart, and collide again. Not only painterly differences, but also pictorial realities contend with each other in volatile discourse, often struggling irreconcilably for the supremacy of their presence – a heterogeneous assemblage of overlapping segments, in which the pictorial elements as well as the suggested associations are engaged in an intricate dialectic.

Text: Margareta Sandhofer