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OUSIA

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OUSIA _ Thoughts on my work

- Flora Hauser

In my last group of works, "Parade", 2022, which was shown at MUMOK in Vienna this summer, I dealt with the topic of "Ousia". The group of works included a sculpturally presented coat and a pair of boots, and 3 murals. Each piece was handmade and manually embroidered by me. At this point I was still having a hard time finding the right word for what I was trying to say. In a paragraph in the exhibition text, I explained my choice of the title "PARADE". This section lists well my search for a defining word to describe my thoughts. Here is an excerpt:

1. PARADE: in general: festive, solemn installation, display // "SACRAL", the word was important to me. An "over", the "epic", "numinous", ... The clothing should be extremely impractical, quasi form and no function. The decoration should be above everything and the union with the room - that is, on a small scale: a large tapestry - was the further symbol of it. Like wallpaper and furniture in Schönbrunn, for example, just a step further.

As already mentioned in the text: the word "sacral" was important to me. Epic and Infinite, Mighty, Timeless and Above All. That's what it was about for me. But at the same time, and perhaps most importantly, it should retain the allegory of these words as they have been associated with many religions (in my personal experience: The Roman Catholic Church), but at the same time be detached from a defined belief culture. So, what is it about if not a defined belief in something? Possibly: about believing in yourself. In believing in oneself, believing in an OVER that lives in us and is everywhere, and last but not least: believing in energies - those of oneself and everyone, between everything, whether dead or alive, an infinitely growing and yet calming energy that lives from everything, detached from time, from everything that exists.

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In my reflections, it soon became clear to me that I had been working on the topic for longer than I was aware of. A lot of what I had already produced started to run together and merge. The beginning, as I see it from my current point of view, was the sudden death of my aunt on 01/28/21. The first death of a person close to me. In the following weeks I worked a lot on music and expressed feelings and thoughts that I had not known before. In a song text to the song "heal II" I spoke about my new world of experience:

*Alles ist Überall
All is Uber all*

*Accept you and it all as pure synergy
Regard yourself as just another energy
Trust in the strength to heal and let every
Believe in all the past souls contribution be
We are all part of the energy
A web we made to heal all of nature's agony
It's webbed by every friend and everyone's family
A connection of the last ten thousand centuries*

Please just let me heal

In my research I came across a new term, a term that I dare to believe describes what I have been trying to describe for a long time:

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Ousia, a word from the beginning of Greek philosophy that is not translated in either German or English. In German it is often translated as "substance" (alongside the more classical translations in a smaller context of meaning: "wealth" and "property"), although this in no way describes the scope of meaning that ousia encompasses. Other descriptions (translated from German) that I was able to find in connection with my research are:

- _ *essence*
- _ *an enduring, time-independent identity*
- _ *Occurrence or cessation of sensually perceiving existence, does not affect its wearer*
- _ *the essentials*
- _ *withdrawn from sensual perception but nevertheless real and independently existent*
- _ *is of a purely spiritual nature and can therefore only be recognized in a purely spiritual way*
- _ *the true being; the actual reality*
- _ *being in the actual sense*
- _ *every idea is of timeless perfection*
- _ *immutable perfection, the perfect*
- _ *Ousia is eternal, independent of time, in a timeless reality*
- _ *the unity of the world soul and the individual souls, WORLD SOUL;*
- _ *Mixed character: mediating authority between the spiritual and material world*
- _ *Access to the spiritual and material world*
- _ *World Soul: Immortal and indivisible Ousia*
- _ *also: body and soul*
- _ *must be unchanged but at the same time in motion, otherwise it would not be recognizable!*

This is what I've been trying to express for a long time:

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And I inevitably thought about art in general.

I think the term Ousia is more substantial when it relates to art than as a subject in itself. Maybe it's no longer relevant. Maybe it only points us to one thing: art.

I've been asking myself a few questions about art for a long time. Which artist doesn't do that? They revolve a lot around the topic: what is art in general? Is everything we see in the museum art? Do we need more terms for the separation of art, art, art and art? "The fine arts" can best be used to describe the contents of the Venetian Pavilions. But is it really all art, or even ... art at all? I'm wondering, in today's time:

- _ *is art that is predominantly political art? Or is it activism?*
- _ *is art that is predominantly conceptual art, or is it an exercise in understanding art history better?*
- _ *is mostly humorous art art, or is it a funny anecdote?*
- _ *is art that mainly works with scientific aspects art, or is it an experiment?*
- ... *isn't art just art if it's 'just art'?*

- _ *in times of violent political, cultural and social events, doesn't art have to remain what it is? 'Just art'?*
- _ *shouldn't any additional property and additional content be included as a matter of course?*
- _ *is art a place that is supposed to deal with social issues, or is art supposed to be something like OUSIA?*
A perfect entity?

- ... *isn't art only art when it relates purely to itself?*
- ... *isn't art the same as Ousia?*

In the exhibition: OUSIA refers to art only as art. There is nothing but art. The space is uniform, symbolically empty and perfect at the same time. And the words come back again - everything is related to art. It is sacred, epic and infinite, powerful, timeless, free of time and above everything, and much, much more.

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I most recently expressed Ousia in my aforementioned work group "PARADE" from 2022: I was unfamiliar with the word at the time, but its philosophy nonetheless guided me forward in my work.

In order to illustrate what OUSIA is based on in my current work, it is necessary to first bring the group of works "PARADE" closer.

"PARADE" looked like this: The group consisted of 5 works. They were presented at the Mumok from June to August 2022 as part of the group exhibition "Nominated...". Three murals in different formats formed the background on one wall. The smallest was 50x30cm, the two medium formats about 120x80cm. In the foreground was a sculpture: a cloak was hung on a delicate, human-sized steel cross (covered by the cloak to the point of subtlety) and trapped in the shape it would have if it were actually worn on the body. The cloak spread its arms; the hood covered an imaginary head. The hood was very large and the only element that didn't need to be wired into its final shape. This was because the processing of the fabric made it very stiff and thus kept its shape by itself. The second sculpture stretched into the room: a subtle steel base on which stood a handcrafted pair of boots.

The works were all created in 2022 and represent a milestone in my work. They build directly on the development of my practice, which I studied intensively from 2011 to 2018. 2019 was a year of upheaval for me, followed by a phase of experiments and finding meaning in myself and in art. With the group of works PARADE I was able to implement my philosophy and practice in my work for the first time and to take a few big steps further. A text that is very important to me, which I wrote about my practice in 2017, becomes valid again today:

I see the main works within my work as the drawings on canvas in the very small and the very large format; on paper it is also the drawings and compositions with writing. There is also text on paper. My notebooks play very important role; for one thing they form the basis, as visual inspiration and as a field for writing. I don't see the products as an end result, but as moments of constant development. They are not something created on purpose, but something that has arisen and is still growing. Drawing has always been important to me. I can't remember a time in my life when it wasn't there. While drawing, as I practiced it up to this point and now, was a semi-conscious creation through deferred decisions, the creation of the manner of my writing was more, through necessity, an unconscious creation.

I studied graphic design at the Higher Graphics School in Vienna, and already there I consciously turned away from digital work in the last two years and started to perfect my analog skills. At the same time, my writing - always small, but getting smaller - came closer and closer to printed aesthetics.

It wasn't until I started creating art myself that I really became aware of the artistic value of my texts. By that I mean the aesthetics of the way I write, less the content. With the realization, I also began to use them more specifically and to make them a part of my work for the first time. I started picking them apart, not literally, but figuratively. So, I tried to understand the reason for the monochrome appearance, as well as the mechanics of my hand movement that led to this, one could say, reverent calm that emanated from the appearance. But while the text always conveys a readable content - even if it is reduced to pure aesthetics in the attempt - the very absence of this in the drawing offers a larger field of interpretation. By dealing with the difference between text and drawing, which have been functioning as the main tools of my mediation for several years now, I realized that the line didn't always have to lead to an image with a few others, the lines used to create text didn't always have to lead to legible writing, and further that these two parts could perhaps even belong together, and other aspects as well - although I always feel obliged to use the classic means - none are subject to any regulation.

I also realized: I didn't have to change just because it was possible. Not scaling up just because the space of opportunity was wider, not accelerating just because the expectation was growing, and not losing sight of the process to get the message across. And also, that one bowed to said expectations much more often than one noticed, and one had to face them much more consciously.

In my current work with these pursuits, as it has been developing for some years now, I am assimilating the elements in my drawings more and more to the way I write, whereby the letters should become illegible forms. I shorten the lines, the density and regularity of how they relate to each other creates partly text-like schemes. The lines should feel like those of writing and at the same time like those of drawing. The aim of my work is often to fill an entire page with this abstract language, i.e. to align it more with the aesthetics of my texts in the overall picture: often filled, little empty space, a rhythmic density, an absolute dynamic, which in the end makes the picture, almost subtly self-contained, sink into itself. Because if nothing is stronger or weaker in itself, if it formed an interplaying unit, it can appear as something pure. I try to take away superfluous elements - those understood and known, those that I don't feel are capable of telling me anything new - and continue to work with those that haven't yet told me everything possible. It takes a lot of

time, but above all a lot of energy, to let the smallest possible thing grow, namely in its density, in width, and not in the size of the individual lines.

The new works are more colorful and livelier than the drawings that were made up to 2018. They had all been produced by me personally - except for the steel constructions that I had made and help I had completing the boots. The hard, long work was evident, as in my early work. For the first time I also worked - after years of concentrating on pictures - in the highly professional field of sculpture.

One thing made the biggest difference: instead of drawings or paintings with pen or paint, it was embroideries.

Embroideries literally means embroidery. The 3 pictures were embroidered and stretched fabrics; sometimes several pieces of fabric were sewn together to form the picture. The boots consisted of hand-embroidered and hand-sewn individual parts, which I brought into shape and stability with the help of my uncle, a shoemaker. The coat formed the main work. I designed the pattern myself. On one hand, it should look like a priest's robe and, on the other hand, like boxing ring jackets, as you know them from boxers' entrances. Every single piece of fabric was meticulously embroidered, partly abstract and partly figurative. I embroidered everything manually with the sewing machine and sewed the parts together myself.

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The works are completely detached from time and yet take a long time. Manual work is valued and the digital space left alone. Consumables are not present, instead objects to be cherished. Eternity is felt, and the moment at the same time. Hard work, striving for perfection and the ritualistic repetition that leads to immortal eternity fill the room.

The soul of art is shown. OUSIA.