

But the work of art is not so naively self-centred; it is essentially a question, an address to the responsive breast, a call to the mind and the spirit.

Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts*, Vol. I, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford 1971), 71

Karl Böhmer – The Logic of Passion

A Paradox: All art has its beginning in perception, and yet it only really starts once contemplation ends. Art concerns itself with the realities of shape and form, realities that lack their *doppelgänger* in both reality and sensibility. The artistic act keeps risking something which does not – yet – have an equivalent. The act of painting takes place on the canvas, where the focus is not on anything given, or preexisting – nothing that enters the image from the outside. Rather, the canvas concerns itself with what happens and what results: the picture plane and image emerge by means of form and colour – their structuring, their rhythm, and what occurs in between these elements, and around them. An arranged space unfolds through proximity, contact and intersection. Meaning/content is contingent to it, the effect of a mute dialogue between forms and colours, an invitation to remember former works – and perhaps even those that we do not yet possess. The image itself speaks, talks things over – and in doing so invites us to enter and partake in a multi-voiced conversation, to answer the implicit calling. Perhaps the anagrammatic relation between ‚*imago*‘ and ‚*amigo*‘, the image-as-work and the friend, points towards the warm reception offered by each image.

It seems as if Karl Böhmer’s tableaux, which are often grouped as profane iconostases, are forms or formulations of this complex pictorial process – in all its obvious clarity and simplicity. They invite contemplation by unfolding, and ultimately withholding, references in a subtle balance that never solidifies but is precariously kept in play, without ever becoming vapidly vague. Contradiction and identity, constancy and change, identity and contradiction, dissolution and solidification, light and its absorption – these are some of the unresolvable potentials animating and structuring the image. They entice the spectator to observe and join the oscillating play of oppositions. The intersecting fields of colour produce unfathomable spacial configurations; an energy emanates from their clear delimitations, animating the individual segments of colour which keep weaving themselves into the fullness of the image. A surplus of light overshoots the image’s totality and creates a vibrant space that exceeds the actual space of the colour, like a spray of water in the sun. The blank white spaces, the openings of the image’s configuration, seem to attract these colours, almost as if the different tones arrange themselves in a silent middle, beyond all tonality – while on the other hand, this very openness lights up and liberates the image. At the same time, the openings mark moments where contemplation is arrested and reversed: anything and everything can be perceived in a fresh light from their vantage points. Space folds up in these areas to create launch points, only to visually unfold again in the image’s continuum. By oscillating between concentration and expansion, space keeps opening up – an unrestricted playing field which, after all, makes meaningful moments possible. Two aspects come into play, both covered by the German word *übersetzen* – a translation and a crossing over, from time to space, space to time, movement to lingering calm.

Through their ongoing discovery of the unique laws of painting, these works of art lay bare their autobiography, which also happens to be the history of their form, of their preconditions and phenomenality. Far removed from any formalism, the precise and clearly delimited segments, arranged in unpredictable and innumerable constellations, promise to

allow, for a moment, entry and admittance to an Other, in analogy to the enigmatic liberty of life.

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