

## The self in the mirror of the world

- Introductory speech to the exhibition "Gabriela Goronzy – Liveliness – 100 drawings" by Dr. Thomas Piesbergen -

*The exhibition "Aliveness - 100 Drawings" by Gabriela Goronzy in the gallery of the Einstellungsraum e.V. takes place within the framework of the annual theme "Rules regulate. Rules regulate!"*

With the cultural upheavals that the Renaissance brought with it also appeared a new topos in the repertoire of fine arts: the self-portrait.

From the epochs before that there are only controversial ones or even only passed down in reports known individual cases. So the sculptor Phidias is supposed to be a figure on the shield of the have shown Athena. Even from the Middle Ages there are only two examples that dated Painter Johannes Aquila originated on church frescoes in Austria Radkersburg and the Slovenian Matjanci.

But only in the Renaissance, in which the individual previously integrated into the collective has been rediscovered, painters began to focus intensely on themselves, initially mostly just hidden or hidden in group pictures, but soon as independent topic. Since then, the self-portrait has permeated art history like one red thread and has become omnipresent in the present in the form of the selfie.

It is true that one can assume for the early days that artists often did not participate in the Face of a model, but studying human physiognomy on one's own have, but the representations soon bear witness to a search for Self-knowledge, mostly with the connotation of the memento mori. Or they serve Self-portrayal, in which one is not looking for the is-self, but a wish-self is constructed in an effort, perhaps at some point, the created vision of the self to be able to fill in.

The mere question of the individual self-shows a much clearer trace of tradition and finds its earliest distinctive expression in Europe in the dictum "Gnothi seauton ": Know yourself!, which in the 5th century BC As an inscription in the vestibule of the temple had been attached by Delphi.

In the Delphic Oracle, the view of the self is at the service of world knowledge in which it is assumed that the processes in our mind correspond to the processes in correspond to the outside world and that is the way in which we organize things and evaluate, follows general principles. The self becomes the mirror of the world.

If we apply this idea to cultural theory, we suddenly find ourselves in the middle of it authoritative discourse on the interacting relationship between identity, culture and Environment.

First of all, the central thesis of determinism should be mentioned: the patterns of action that Self-perception and thus also the identity of the person are therefore of shaped his environment. The culture can be derived accordingly from nature.

By exploring himself, man understands how the world has shaped him. When comparing reality, however, we have to see very quickly: ours today. The world in which we live is shaped primarily by us humans, and not just passively, but also active. And in the highly differentiated post-industrial society, we observe how different cultural realities side by side within a social structure exist even though they persist in the same man-made environment.

This is where those opposing historical materialism and determinism come into play. Schools of thought of possibilism and structuralism, those of the hypothesis, human Culture gets its structure by adapting to natural conditions, decided contradict. Instead, their assumptions state the structure of the human Thinking gives importance to the things of the environment, culture transforms nature, and this is how man creates his own cultural environment.

If we follow this view, it is not just our look inside that tells us something about them outer world, but the look into the outer world that we have created reveals something to us about our cultural selves, whose patterns of action have produced this world.

In order to be able to describe cultural facts despite this divergent discourse and To do justice to the dynamics of cultural reproduction is done in the ethnological Theory for about three decades, often with the concept of structuring structure worked. With him, man-made appearances become in ours cultural matrix denotes that in a physical, sociological or political way regulate our actions retrospectively. But we can just as easily understand ourselves as structuring structures. The Humans and their environment are both parts of a self-regulating system become.

This inversion of perspective and the twofold relationship between self and world can also be traced back to intellectual history. Just like first in antiquity and later in the self became the mirror of the world in the early Renaissance in the late Renaissance and Reformation, the world became a mirror of the self. We find this looking in the opposite direction e.g. at Michel des Montaigne, the wrote: "This big world is the mirror we have to look into in order to save ourselves from Reason to get to know. ", As well as later with William Makepeace Thackeray, in his Vanity Fair it says: "The world is a mirror, from which everyone his own Face. " The "Gnothi seauton" has become "Gnothi ton kosmon", the "Know yourself" has become "Know the world".

But the path to knowledge is a rocky one in both directions. Because right now At present, the outward view seems to be lost in countless pretensions of the life. We are surrounded by such a thick, numbing fog of mock conflicts Misinformation, projected desired identities and their staged sham life, of conflicting role models and value systems that it hardly seems possible to be in to an authentic representation of the self to a seemingly random presence find.

Or we find ourselves in the uncomfortable position of recognizing that this very lack of Authenticity very well and perhaps most truthfully depicts our cultural selves.

The works in the tableau "100 Drawings" by Gabriela are in this area of tension Goronzy, whose dominant, recurring element is the Self-portrait is. First of all, there are some classic frontal glances in the mirror underneath that the artist sees yourself in the eyes and then your image to the representative observer. you seem to follow the Delphic slogan "know yourself".

But this simplest possible arrangement is already on several other sheets extended: The artist forms herself through additional mirrors when looking at her own Mirror image and thus shows the dyad of observer and observed object. What the observer can see depends on the choice of his perspective. Also at When looking at oneself in the mirror, certain areas always remain unobservable. The The observed always marks the limits of the perceptual ability of the Observer and only when you include the observer in the picture you get a almost complete picture.

In other drawings, the mirror itself suddenly becomes the object of observation However, the mirror surface remains empty and the sheet is dominated by a baroque appearing, magnificently ornamented frame. Here is a second important element the plan that we encounter in numerous variants in the tableau: the ornament, that too is produced again and again by the multiple reflection of individual picture elements.

The ornaments, which are usually formed from human figures, are particularly striking those that can be read as idealized and standardized self-portraits. Gabriela Goronzy mentioned films by the choreographer Busby Berkeley, who in staged countless dance and revue films in the 30s and 40s and thus attracted attention, that his dancers never become symmetrical again in the course of the choreography arranged patterns and ornaments.

So here we see, as a pictorial metaphor, the cultural structure in which the Human being and in which he inserts his individual identity into a group identity subordinate to produce a higher form - not an individual, but a cultural identity that forms the necessary framework for self-perception or they are even almost completely superimposed.

This tension between the perception of our self as an individual or part a group, as a self-sufficient entity or replaceable piece of the mosaic, as an original or Copy, Gabriela Goronzy illuminates in a very differentiated way and without concluding Rating. Some sheets show the collective as something convincingly aesthetic in which the individual in favour of a whole that is more than the sum of its parts Loses meaning, but at the same time is protected in the community.

A particularly touching example of this is the drawing after a photograph from the 40s showing the artist's mother with two friends. She doesn't just pose represents an attempt to get closer to one's own identity-forming family history, but also the security in a community of equals. Because the three Girlfriends look like triplets in clothing and posture. You represent a positive private and social consensus and together form a self-contained form.

Other sheets, however, show headless women who look like old-fashioned dolls. Paper from a pool of different heads can choose the right one. In this the self is reduced to its representable surface, as a context any means of adaptation to the different demands of cultural Environment. The adaptive pressure of the external structure causes a negative connotation here loss of identity.

On some drawings we see patterns of circles and squares attached to both the remember the geometric shapes in which Leonardo da Vinci clamped his ideal man, as well as constructions of the central perspective in the Renaissance. In these structuring, hierarchically effective line networks we see a dark, faceless group of human shapes, sometimes an opposition of the individual and Group arranged as if walking in a hamster wheel.

We also find the individual leaving on a drawing with faces behind vertical lines are arranged, optionally readable as pearls on a string or as trapped behind bars. Just a head isolated from the others is not deprived of part of his face by the vertical stripes.

We encounter structure and normalization in opposition to the resistant individual in the images not only on the metaphorical level, but also in formal aspects: The primordial ground of the self, the still formless will becomes vitality represented by the most vivid of all colours: the dominant red. The lines of the drawings, on the other hand, seem to tame this force with all their might want. She lacks any spontaneity and she testifies to the patient, controlled process the construction of images and reality, which is only broken by in a few moments escalating red or from spontaneous fingerprints that make her irrefutable Assert individuality and authenticity.

However, we also encounter control and standardization in a very concrete and cultural way significant image quotes.

There are the already mentioned idealized characters from the revue films from the 1930s as well as photo models from fashion magazines, then as now, not only as wishful self serve, but also as role clichés with which women use a certain, narrowly defined social role should be assigned. So they also fulfill the function symbolic-structural control elements, the social rules and hierarchies postulate.

Set aside these role clichés and confusingly similar in appearance, but created with a socio-culturally opposite motivation, we look up several pictures of the superhero Wonder Woman in action. The Amazon Wonder Woman, those with an unclouded awareness of their femininity, an almost limitless ability to Love and forgiveness and a cleverly disguised sexual orientation of Men ruled the world, turned into a pop culture in the 1940s leading figure of feminism and a figure of identification for lesbian and bisexual women.

Because just as well as role models conveyed by the media manage to access us and to manipulate or even shape us subconsciously against our will, like that we can too in the diverse fund of culturally traditional narratives and images actively look for identity-creating role models that help us to escape from repressive Liberating norms by promoting new norms that previously suppressed

Help aspects of ourselves to blossom. Indeed, standards and Role models not only contribute to regulation, but also to deregulation.

The look into the world not only helps to recognize what has shaped us, it also helps us also by allowing us to find alternatives to adopt possible desired identities, with which we can overwrite traditional, repressive influences. On this way the strange face can also become a self-portrait.

This wrestling of the observing self with the observed self, indicated here, the discrepancy between what we are, what we can see of ourselves, what we would like to be and what we should be in the eyes of others eventually finds one wonderful expression in a drawing made by Caravaggio's "Seven Works of the Mercy" has been inspired. Two figures shown in plan, apparently both self-portraits, are in a wrestling match and thereby form a form that reminds of a ying-and-yang sign that has not yet been closed.

A found and reshaped image is used here to illustrate how we are trying an authentic representation in a world of found norms and structures ourselves, our reluctance to find what is found or by means of various Models to assume constructed mirror images, and perhaps also the necessity finally with the dual nature of our selves, with the constantly changing cyclone externalized self and internalized world, with the identity in constant transfer, To make peace.

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