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Thomas Nowotny

"Nowotny is a painter with a natural talent that is near impossible to find. His brushstroke is incredibly strong and always bound to earth. He is wild and chaotic, flowing and dancing, and always right on the border between creation and destruction. Continuously exposed to the elements but also continuously contemplating. A tree whose seeds can only sprout once they have been exposed to the fire."

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On the necessity of painting

And that is what happens in Nowotny's works: shadows seem to emerge as a result of an excess of creativity – guided more by the energetic arm than the brushstroke, Threats gather, as if they were on the verge of becoming a manifestation of danger.

Then, however, Nowotny is also this: a rhythm of dance-like hovering forms on a light blue background: a game full of lightness: a present-day Fragonard – swing painting - rendering. And the focused colour spaces leading into a brightness that leaves everything behind it. Nevertheless, this brightness (giving hope) is reached through good spaces, in the absence of any threat.

Nowotny's paintings possess precisely that which makes painting come alive – something no other art achieves to the same extent, namely exploiting and realising a reactive potential in such a way as to create a lasting effect as well as the possibility of renewing itself – notably in the same/similar/comparable image. Painting, in particular, is eminently suited to leave the virtual space of museums and large galleries and be ubiquitously effective. These capacities for renewal on the one hand and encompassing presence on the other hand signifies that in painting, an art has been created that is profoundly human and singularly appropriate to human needs. Painting can follow humans to where they live and the art can be effective on their walls. The human soul requires more than white walls.

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Parallel universes of colour and form

Grumbling – conscientious pessimism – is not his cup of tea. Never was, even when he changed between comic and Pierre Corneille styles as a kind of brut painter and received the Salzburg Regional Award for his wild scenes in the early 1990s.

Shortly afterwards, he moved to New York, was inspired by the American abstracts, became embroiled in the city, which he was "unable to process" by painting und therefore photographed instead – fascinated by the art and its scene, the 'easy living' in this melting pot that never sleeps. But 9/11 politicised the city – too much for his taste, and he returned to Austria, pursuing his desire to express his view of the world and not its reflection. Light became ever more important in his paintings; he developed his individual vocabulary, debris, wipers, colour bundles, lines blending into planes, knots, space whorls, light, shadows, painted (himself) free from isms and the constraints imposed by the art market. Painting is his world – not the market.

And, for Thomas Nowotny, it seems as if the world is a stage set to be repeatedly painted anew for a play called "Life in several acts" – not the reflection of reality but its interpretation. It is no problem-ridden, sad play, no complaint, but rather one that relates a future, whose past is our present.

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Fundamental observations from a baroque perspective

As a matter of principle, it rarely seems coherent to see a resumption of traditional artistic behaviour beneath the surface of new painting.

Indeed, the energy of the inspiring pictorial wilderness unfurling in Nowotny's paintings awakens memories of the colour intoxication of baroque oil sketches and the informality of the New Wild Ones of the 1980s in their paintings. The special colour timbre comes close to the dramatic yet equally subtle chiaroscuro of the Old Masters.

Added to this in these pictures is a zeitgeist aspect of transcontinental subculture, which increasingly claimed the advanced cultural area of Europe. Nowotny's paintings are fleeting dream narratives, beyond the dictates of everyday logic, and appear somehow otherworldly. Imagination surpasses the temporal and spatial boundaries. A feeling of freedom – or at least a new heaven – has become discernible: everything is as it seems. Dreaming takes place in interstellar dimensions, while microcosm and macrocosm are thrown to the wind: nothing is as it seems.

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Cosmic explosions – The paintings of Thomas Nowotny

Is it the distant flickering of a light, or is it a gigantic explosion in super-super slow-motion?

Is it a unique event or does it happen all the time?

Is it the memory of the first billionth second following the creation of the universe, or just a tiny part of what we see today – gas and dust clouds – primeval matter?

Thomas Nowotny's paintings invite us to a journey through time – to a voyage into infinity. The colours engulf us into a realm of light and primordial dust, from which everything is created and into which everything will return.

Artist statement

"Modern world neglects reality":

Being conscious of what is going on in our modern calculated but chaotic world realizing that most people are just passengers on a journey they have not booked cause they are stressed out to service the expectations the system puts on them.

Art as well as philosophy is the most important value for mankind. Art offers the chance to reflect upon our values and needs. Taking time is a privilege. I decided, in the time I paint, to step outside of everything regulating and limiting my instinct. In this moment it is about me the empty canvas, paint – and my conscious reflection about now. For me working on a piece of art is one of the most freeing and honest of expressions, like partaking of recreation in a resort, pushing away everything that bothers my mind. To get into the flow, to fly as high and to dive as deep as I can, without destroying myself, to find the unexpected, to be surprised, to stop at the right moment - that is always my goal. In my paintings each of the polychrome layers is connected to another – an evolutionary process – the colours of the artworks are the result of many layers with glaze paint. The organic surfaces look like they are able to wriggle out of the canvas, but frozen in a moment of interaction. The observer –has to take time to tease out the story lurking behind - Space is endless.

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