

**ALEXANDER WOLFF**

November 2 – Dezember 14, 2013  
Vernissage November 1st, 6 – 8 PM

**Figures and Models  
Form and Versions**

A text on Alexander Wolff's exhibit at Anne Mosseri-Marlio Galerie, Basel  
Translated from the original German text by Kerstin Cmelka „Gestalten und Versionen“

How do we perceive an artistic statement when it copies itself and changes medium, when an object turns into a picture, a photograph into a painting, a performance into a print?

In the following commentary I dare to make the experiment to connect the reproductive technique of printmaking/graphic reproduction with the performative, multiplication aspect of a musical cover version, and thereby highlight aspects of Alexander Wolff's modes of production which are interesting to me, and through them the poignant issue of hierarchy.

Alexander Wolff uses pictorial-graphical multiplication methods in his exhibit.

Single elements of a sculpture are used as printing plates to print modular looking shapes onto fabric. After the printing process these individual components are converted and reassembled as a modernistic sculpture that presents itself as a display for storing books, magazines or musical tools which the artist potentially uses as a transmitter from the exhibition out into the world.

Or: a silkscreen motif/stencil is being rubbed/printed repeatedly onto a pre-dyed piece of canvas on raw asphalt before the complex relief piece is stretched onto its frame.

Or else: The effect/impact of fabric dye, stencil painting and monotype is tested on a small piece of canvas and the most promising pieces are then arranged with a patchwork like sewing technique to make a new pictorial composition.

As well as: printable devices of all sorts (wire, wood, plastic and fabric) are coated with paint, and in addition to a 3-dimensionally-folded piece of canvas, are pressed through a mangle to produce - once unfolded - an image. Charged with seams and cuts, additional composition parameters turn the whole into an arrangement of abstract painting, ornamentation, and LSD infused version of trompe l'oeil.

What actually is the print and what is the printing plate? What is the form and what is its support? For example, the sculpture is the printing plate for a painting or a curtain, or else the raw asphalt of the street, a publicly accessible printing plate, which then encounters another tool - the exposed screen.

Couldn't therefore the photographic motif for this screen - a photo of the trees in front of Alexander Wolff's studio window and one of a sponge in the bathroom - be seen as a cover version of the artist's environment, his reality, and couldn't the world also be seen as a kind of printing plate for his artistic expression? And isn't the process of pressing various items through a mangle a type of performance as well?

First let's go back to what generally defines a cover version:

A musical cover imitates an existing piece of music. It may be of interest that there may be several variations of a song that exist simultaneously, or that the remake initiates a competitive relation to the original (or to its preceding song version) that in the best case puts a lid on top of the previous version which it eventually entirely replaces. One of the principles of a cover song is that the original version is known to the listener. If we don't know the original we can't recognize the cover, we preclude any comparison nor compare to the quality of the original.

Alexander Wolff's making of covers completely erases the hierarchical momentum. The first possibility interests him the most, namely the one that produces the greatest possible number of variations.

Classical graphic reproduction includes the principles of imprint and screenprint (monotypes, contact print, serigraphy) as the simplest methods. These were later recognised as artistic techniques of their own but also as those offering the richest technical variation. Wolff understands and masters this technique as no other and has made this his primary discipline, one which he constantly researches and experiments with to develop complex production and composition structures that move forward and backward as well as in all dimensions in order to create another original and unique piece. The unprimed canvases are dyed with pigment, printing techniques are used, layer by layer or all together, in sync, in a choreographed order, above or beneath the print. In addition, painterly techniques are applied, as well as industrially-printed or self-printed textiles. Seams relate to printstripes, the canvas is turned on its head, the wall is treated, as the painting that hangs on it - even a sculpture in the room becomes part of the painting and vice versa, and yet paintings are hanging in the windows, through which one could see the world as a form that one could include in the exhibition. As an expert in textiles, couturier, painter, graphic artist, curator, Feng Shui master, stage designer, workshop leader, graphic pioneer, Wolff uses his techniques and perfectionism in researched manner and goes backwards and forward, above and below and after many trials adds his well known material and his media. Should a mistake occur, he embraces it and makes it the center of his work and develops a new technique for it, a new precedent is set.

As in modern German folksongs – something that that hardly exists anymore but that Alexander Wolff does – there is a juxtaposition of always new, exchanging, self copying and repeating expansion of another cover version, coexisting free of hierarchy but still related and displaying their beauty. The question of who was first and how that can compete is optimistically moved to the background in favor of the processes of presentation and activation of ideas.

We all know what an MDF board looks like and many of us have made potato or carrot prints, placed a coin under a sheet of paper and made a rubbing of its surface. Although Alexander Wolff can create tremendously complex and complicated works with these techniques his aim is neither to propagate them, nor - like a nerd - to demonstrate that he masters them better than others. But perhaps to show in a small way, that in the arts the issue is not to find the lid that matches the pot, but rather to show with grand gestures, that a new version should not obliterate the old. Perhaps all the ideas are here before our eyes, and as much as we court them, emphatically get in touch with them, that's what it's all about.