

Martin Schibli:

My perversion is the Belief in Art - a curatorial comment....

My perversion is the Belief in true Love

Ellen Cantor

The title of the exhibition is inspired by the above-mentioned quote from Ellen Cantor, which at first glance may seem a bit humorous - completely in line with the artist's other production. But, on closer inspection, the quote includes an interesting paradox: *the* view of the artist who critically relates to the structures of the outside world at the same time as the artist herself expresses a belief in lasting and true values through art. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in Ellen Cantor's work. It's no surprise. She has long been an artist of artists. Her work revolved around her contemporaries, society and politics, but perhaps really more about life itself, about passion and the struggle to survive as a human being in a world of complex insecurity. Everything portrayed with an energy and dedication. So even though Cantor could appear as a critical voice to our time - and could be provocative - there was often a good dose of humour and perhaps even an optimistic belief that art could be the way to something better. An attitude that differs from much other contemporary art that for several years has become increasingly aestheticized, polished and positioned to such an extent that it often becomes a purely decorative confirmation of which agenda is currently correct or not.

In fact, many artists today wish to regain the autonomy of art. They de facto have a strong belief in art. The ability to reflect on life, its poetic power in the world, its energy. A genuine belief that art has its own *raison d'être*. A number of artists today are increasingly questioning the theorizing view of art that has become prevalent in several parts of the art world during the last decade. As a result, in many places it has also led to a formalized view of art and artistry, which in turn has influenced academic art education, the view of who an artist is, how exhibitions should be curated, etc. - ultimately influenced the view of what is considered quality. right now. The individual artist's practice sometimes seems to be more governed by the currently prevailing theoretical frameworks of reference - which have sometimes become dogmatic ideological positions where the theoretical outcome seems to be determined in advance. Thereafter, the works are interpreted by like-minded curators, curators and critics in a kind of circular reasoning that determines the artistic quality whether it follows the current theories and conclusions. But where is the art? Art is subject to theoretical frameworks instead of these can contribute to a variety of different interpretations and perspectives based on the artist's work itself. Art becomes predictable, accurate and all too often becomes an instrumental tool in order to fulfill other agendas. We have simply got a new form of academism.

The standard art of academism is seldom written into art history. The hope of a change in the art world - a new view of art - has grown stronger with more and more people over a decade. The desire to restore the autonomy of art will certainly be strengthened by the COVID-19 pandemic. When societies and the art worlds start up again, a large group will not want to return to the status quo that prevailed before the pandemic. Instead, there will be a need and a hope for something new. That a new energy is added to art. A belief in the intrinsic value of art. If this happens, it will certainly have consequences for a structure that has grown strongly in the art world, especially during the last decade, which may lead to one of the biggest changes in the art world since the early 90s. When old power structures are allowed to give way to the new and the autonomy of art. Maybe it's time for Jonatan Meese's "dictatorship of art"?

Artists from different generations and backgrounds participate in the exhibition. The curatorial selection process has largely been based on dialogues with artists. How individual artists relate to

other artistry, rather than formulating in advance a strict theoretical framework that artists must relate to. In these dialogues, concepts such as energy, uncompromisingness, passion and dedication, independence have been important keywords. Common to the artists is that they have a high degree of integrity and work consistently regardless of current trends in art. The artists' works meet each other in the exhibition and create interesting dialogues among themselves.

The artists' backgrounds differ, but several of the artists have a relationship to underground culture and punk while others draw material from fashion and / or pornographic magazines and popular culture. Most artists relate personally to subjects such as passion, love, adversity, the physical, diseases, dreams and more. Together, the artists largely address the human struggle in orienting themselves in a here and now. Their artistic practice is characterized by a high degree of energy with few or no compromises.

Some artists have a background from punk. Punk can be viewed from several perspectives: an era, an attitude, a style of music, a generous all-you-can-play attitude, or a way of living in the broadest sense. But the exclusion - to represent the marginalized can also mean a liberation and an expression of independence from the establishment. Punk was one of the liberal underground environments of the 70s and 80s that characterized (western) Berlin. This world attracted a number of artists who also found their motifs in this environment, such as Rainer Fetting, who often portrayed the energetic music scene in the city and the alternative approach. The painting with quickly executed brushstrokes radiated the same energy as the music. Artists such as Salomé (Wolfgang Ludwig Cihlarz) and Rainer Fetting, along with a number of other artists, were collectively referred to as "Neue Wilde". A term used to denote young painters who, with precision and quick brushstrokes, resumed their figurative painting, usually in strong clear colours. Several of the artists had painted themselves through the 70s when figurative painting was not in high demand, but they broke through internationally in the early 80s. But some artists actively participated in the music scene, Luciano Castelli and Salomé had in 1979 started the legendary punk band "Geile Tieren" and Martin Kippenberger was for a short time artistic director of the legendary club SO36 in Kreuzberg, Berlin, where many legendary bands played.

The punk scene in Moscow - which already existed in the time of the Soviet Union - is strong and energetic. Alisa Yoffe belongs to this world, which can be seen in her black wide painting on white that is raw, stripped and energetic. Charged symbols that provoke in their execution. But her reference to punk is not a nostalgic greeting. It is rather to be regarded as a very real piss off attitude to the present society here and now: a lasting reluctance to be part of the establishment. Punk gives the energy. The white canvas - or wall - can be the battlefield where everything takes place without compromise. Yoffe is strong in both standing outside society's norm system, but probably the exclusion gives her energy and the freedom to change things and go her own way.

Punk's attitude was in many places a permissive world for a series of cross-border activities that moved outside the conventions. Luciano Castelli had already used himself in the early 70s in cross-border self-portraits, a game of presenting himself in various characters, for example as a swan, in a sequin dress or only wearing nylon socks. The transformation of identities also became part of the band Geile Tieren's cross-border aesthetics with a lot of skin, string and high heels. Maybe it was about embracing our real desires and letting go of inhibitions. Together with Salomé, he also carries out the collaboration The Bitch and her Dog, which is also cross-border on several levels. Salomé portrays a geisha walking and Castelli herself acts as her dog. A game about roles, sex and dominance.

The idea of crossing borders is one of art's most desirable quality criteria. It can to some extent also explain why many artists are fascinated by individuals who live in the periphery, those who go beyond the norm and go their own way. Independent. Alba S Enström's paintings are full of a number

of human characters - real and fictional. His characters are poets, artists, musicians or simply individual characters who go beyond the norm. Strikingly many characters are strong women who stand for will and self-confidence. The other characters may appear androgynous. In his painting there is also an energetic speed in the execution and with a loving attitude he depicts characters who live in the periphery, but usually, like all people, desire love. Enström's painting often also captures psychological aspects of how difficult it can be with true love and fulfilling dreams in a contemporary world, but also that love, passion and dreams can be expressed in a number of different ways.

Love, life and motherhood? Is love only a social construction that really does not matter? Or can it be true in a larger sense? In her later paintings, Amalia Vekri reinterprets the biblical creation story from a more contemporary perspective. The creation story is still a cultural-historical reference point for thinking about the relationship between the bodily and the temptation - the human. Intricate paintings where Eva, the snake, the fruit and the trees have partly become one with the organic ornamental shapes that can resemble breasts or womb. Adam, on the other hand, seems to have disappeared. How does the interplay today between biology, culture and the individual's own desires work?

Eva Andrea Győri's sculptures Chest Variations move in the interplay between the intellect and the body, in this case the identification of the breasts - real as well as symbolic - as a female attribute and contribute to giving life. But, what happens if the body gets sick? And that the body literally lives its life beyond our intellect and our control? How does it affect the individual's self-image? The artist takes on a reality for many women who lose their breasts and have to deal with artificial implants. The artist is seriously toying with the idea that perhaps one should see it as an opportunity to create something new - with new forms and functions - and not to imitate something that has already been lost?

In his contribution, Mercedes Sturm-Lie also brings together the paradox between the womb - that which gives life and forms an image of creation - and the existence of civilization, which is basically based on violent capital. In Sturm-Lie's work, violence is always latently present. She combines with great energy personal experiences from today with references from early modernism. She also visits places that have a symbolism and / or significance for historical events that have influenced the history of Europe and the world, but which also have an impact on the history of her own family and thereby who she is. She cannot escape being a child of a story defined by violence - a kind of alien - but she chooses to believe in the future. To give life.

Even with Miriam Cahn, the brutal violence is latently present. Dissolved figures - almost like living ghosts - that want our attention. Cahn often pushes up the color scale so that the paradox between the surface and the content of the works reinforces that the paintings seem to be in a frightening twilight zone. A tension that touches a reality here and now. Viljami Heinonen's painting also has a bodily displacement, dissolved and violent, which seems to be in conflict with its surroundings and destroy them internally. Eeva Peura also moves in a more dreamy world where violence and other events already seem to have taken place. Energy itself is amoral. Dedication can be a positive force, frenzy can be brutal and devastating. But it is the energy - the will to change - that can change the state of affairs. Whether it concerns art or communities at large.

Perhaps the ongoing pandemic - which has also affected the exhibition's logistics in a number of different ways - has also enabled a fresh start for art. That we are now again at "Stunde null". In that perspective, the exhibition can function as an imperative to allow art to exist again on its own terms. Not having to conform to other conditions and / or dogmatic positions. The exhibition can be seen as a tribute to art in all its varied forms. Belief in the autonomy of art. The belief that art is a place for dreams and reflections based on the conditions of life.