

Carola Dertnig

Es zeichnet, es forscht - Drawing, researching

The collage is a medium that allows us to connect different levels of visual representation. Carola Dertnig works with collage as stage area. The graph paper serves as a grid onto which she applies pictorial elements and relates them to one another.

The precursors of collage stem from Japanese art from the 10<sup>th</sup> Century when calligraphers wrote their verses onto sheets of pastel-colored papers that were first torn and then pasted together. Throughout centuries collage has unfolded its wondrous effects, particularly when spatiotemporal relations gained importance, such as in, what is so crucial in modern art, Cubism's attempts at two-dimensional spatiality or the manifest-like compositions of constructivism, striving for a new world in which it should be possible to extend space into the cosmic.

It is no coincidence that Carola Dertnig focuses on collage work. Coming from performance, she works with the interrelationship of body, stage, text and act. In superposing body, language and space, it is not least a question of the shifts from the subject of artist and viewer for Dertnig. With a mutual responsibility in mind, she develops a strategy of resistance in which action and reception interrelate in a work-sharing relationship. In her collage work, Carola Dertnig articulates these interrelations, such as in *The Painter, the Boy and Tina Bara*, in which she correlates a photograph of Paul McCarthy at one of his first actions carrying a large format image with a drawing of a dancer. Graphic linear forms, colored and ornamented planes, these structure the image as stage area and rely on the viewer to be actively involved by moving the optical planes and therefore participate in the performance of the image.

Referring to Yvonne Rainer and Simone Forti, Carola Dertnig opens a field in which dance, performance, literature, visual arts and film intertwine. Yvonne Rainer's video "Hybrid" from 2002 for example is based on a choreography the artist conceptualized for

Mikhail Baryshnikov's White Oak Dance Project. It deals with the translation of Aldous Huxley's novel *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, which formed a venture point for Carola Dertnig to investigate minimalism in dance and music. In her own performances, in which Dertnig works with strict movements and text runs in a tight formalist order, she also integrates her collages and pictorial compositions. The collage serves as a notation and script for movement and actions.

The Galerie für zeitgenössische Kunst in Leipzig invited Carola Dertnig to respond artistically to the museum's collection. This is a complex challenge for an artist in that it requires not only to reflect the artistic but also the institutional conditions. Carola Dertnig investigated the specific key works of the collection, which included works by Kippenberger and Tony Oursler for whom the artist worked as an assistant in the 1990's and whose work she is very familiar with. In her collage work she also integrated work from artists who are not part of the collection, like Eva Hesse and Tina Bara, a photographer working with the oppositional peace movement in Eastern Germany; this is a statement in itself to the collection's focus on male/Western artists.

"What kind of artists are you to not carry any pencils in your pocket?" asked Martin Kippenberger to a group of young artists in the early 1990's. To be ready at all times to draw, sketch, note and realize ideas is apparently part of an artist's expertise.

Carola Dertnig, who was part of this group, was impressed by this pithy remark of the great Kippenberger, appreciating the significance of the artistic gesture.

The hierarchy of the drawing as preliminary "result" surprisingly holds its ground in stubborn opposition to painting, reflecting Kippenberger's assumption that drawing is a first idea, the important moment of artistic inspiration in which the "spirit streams into the hand."

Albeit artists such as Martin Kippenberger performed the traditional artist's image and questioned, or rather de-ideologized, what seemed firmly established with humor and irony, the myth of the inspired, touched-by-god, relentlessly exercising, working, and producing artist can obtain even at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century — despite the avant-garde's effort to value drawing as an equal medium to painting, or maybe precisely because they did so.

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In her collage "Es, zeichnet, es forschet, Spiel, Hopel/ Weihnachtsmann," Carola Dertnig arranges a collage of the photographic reproduction of the hand-written "drawn" text referring to Kippenberger's dictum, a photograph of artist Tina Bara, writing of Philippe Parreno, a re-worked drawing of Carol Rama, a section of a water-color by Tony Oursler, as well as a piece of wallpaper, the depiction of a sofa, a graphic spot and a snippet of a drawing by Kippenberger on graph paper.

In the drawn poem, the undertakings of the artist are newly gauged. Framed by the proficiency of drawing, research and reading appear as the key paradigms of today's artistic workers.