

The artist Reiter

In the so-called “curriculum vitae”, everyone turns into a researcher of happiness on their own behalf. Where have I arrived, what gives me pleasure and what will keep giving me pleasure until the end?

Roland Reiter’s biography includes excruciating years during his schooldays. As a child, he was dyslexic and he came from a social class where the word “dyslexic” was unknown in its utter monstrosity. Many attempts were made to combat the boy’s dyslexia. In the course of such combats a deficit is always turned into an affair of state. The child finds himself confronted with all of humanity who has decided that being dyslexic is not acceptable. Yet the dyslexic boy did not suffer the drama of the gifted child. Talented he was, albeit in a one-sided way (he won every drawing competition), and under these circumstances it always depends on the extent to which the one-sidedness is lived out, and this means, from a fundamentalist train of thought, how much one exploits one’s own talent for “everything”. This is the life of an artist and even in his childhood Reiter moved away from letters, resorted to drawing and later visual arts. “This is my language,” says the artist.

In discussions on art, being left with no choice but to opt for one language since a different one is out of the question has often been reduced to the platitude of art simply being the result of necessity and not ability. But necessity alone will not suffice for art, which thrives on taking liberties. It is also rumoured about art that it rather tends to emphasize the tragic. Yet on the other hand it is an excellent medium for bearing witness to joy. The strong presence and virtuosic arrangement of Reiter’s combination of two areas of his *joie de vivre* – the motorcycle and the drum kit – in a work of art is memorable, not least since the montage can be understood in terms of research into happiness: the entire installation keeps the drum kit and motorcycle suspended and represents a sheer state of suspension itself. Anything that is not freely suspended cannot be happiness, as the reality principle ruthlessly comes into effect from the moment on when one has “both feet on the ground”. Practised stability prevents this state of suspension, the prerequisite for our mundane happiness.

Now, there is no object “by nature” in the entire world that could be half motorcycle and half drum kit. Engineering will also be hesitant about constructing such a thing that can have no practical use. Reiter’s concern is the disruption of naturalism. Accordingly, his works also contain polemics against any conventional representational quality that is guided by a sense of reality. Once again it becomes obvious that art derives from “artificial”, that it has its own set of rules (i.e. its own possibilities) and that its purpose is no purpose of use. This is not to state that it were useless:

the expression of joy, even obsession, is indispensable because it serves as proof for how one human on earth did find relief and that at least not everyone had to be unhappy. The expression of joy competes with the sense of reality. The reified combination of motorcycle and drum kit is slightly reminiscent of the way in which dreams assemble their own reality. Dreams (like myths at one time) are not unreasonable. They are reasonable in a *different* kind of way, and art is the socially granted and permitted possibility to work (and serve society) with this different kind of reason.

Reiter's working practice is not least anchored in the personal. The artist processes, sublimates but also simplifies and dramatizes experiences collected on his journey through life. His art is not coldly calculating; instead, the emotional, the "expressive" element is one of its key characteristics. The "drum kit-motorcycle" (or "motorcycle-drum kit") is evidence to this fact and the initially expressive honesty of rock and roll is a utopian motif of this dream-work. Delving into Reiter's works one encounters another motif that frequently occurs in dreams: furs and hairs that get under one's skin in Reiter's art.

In one of Reiter's works, something akin to the autonomy of the growth of hair is taking place in the impressive fusion of a golden helmet and the voluminous outgrowth of black hair that the helmet, a gilded motorcycle helmet, barely manages to contain. The sculpture has a mythic expressiveness and is still typical of modernity. A golden helmet is wholly naturalized

in art history; one could use the phrase that the golden helmet is an "icon" of art history. Yet more so it has become a cliché due to its ongoing reception over the centuries, and the truly modern artist wastes no time with the futile effort of destroying the cliché but incorporates it and uses it to create something – art.

The fact that the beautiful helmet fails to exercise moderation because it is evidently unable to control the mass of hair, which it is at least supposed to serve as a cover for as well, is uncanny and amusing in equal measure. The gold-gleaming helmet and the headless growth of hair – together they form a mythical figure that has the power to remain in the observer's memory. "Mythical" is one way to call these objects or figures that have not passed through the filter of rationality but that in return tell stories that pass on constellations of existence with great sensual intensity. This is to be said about certain branches of modern art: they preserve the sense for the subliminal, by no means overcome archaic quality of the rationalized, "disenchanted" world.

Franz Schuh