

WORDS ON THE EXHIBITION AT THE DISTRICT 3 MUSEUM, FRI 13TH SEPT
2002

Here I am mainly exhibiting figural pieces, and only by way of an outline, pot ceramics : objects which should appear as such and at the same time fulfill a purpose.

In the 50s and 60s, the purpose was still a moral instance in the work of the ceramics artist, although at the same time the great Maria Bilger had created ceramic sculptures that qualified as a type of Austrian Picasso. She was also a painter and textile artist, but I just feel that she is an artist of international standing with regard to her works in clay.

There were and are first rate ceramics artists in Austria, but ceramics has risen in our latitudes – and those of South Germany – never in that aura of museum directors and snobs – without whose influence there would be no art market. Why? I do not know. A light fragrance is wafting through the profession towards “superior daughters” or “superior Jewish daughters”. Certainly it is a category of art in which women often usually succeed. In Nazi times many ceramics artists – who had made themselves a name – left the home fields and made their career abroad. At the same time there were large, successful porcelain manufacturers that now had to contend with huge problems relating to sales. Of course the prestige item “porcelain” is looked on as valuable : white, translucent, high fired – it figures high above the inferior relations stoneware and china, or faience. But independent artistic porcelain pieces were only possible in Vienna from the middle of 1960 : in “my” study time – the 50s – at the Academy for Applied Art there were no ovens which were hot enough. Only after the death of Professor Obsieger when a non-ceramics artist – the sculptor Leinfellner – took over his post, did a fresh breeze and adequate ovens make their way into the classrooms, and the running glazes that today often appear outmoded, were replaced by other ones.

I have not pursued the latest developments, but it is true that abiding by practicality became more and more unimportant, while volume and the heavy, fragile clay became impractical. More adventurous designs were seen, e.g., teapots with tiny spout-holes, standing on high complicated stilts, that had moulded [sic] from a utility object to a display object – too expensive and too impractical to be able to be a part of every day life: art, therefore.

There are still areas in which ceramics has a scarcely perceived yet important *raison d'être* : crockery and bathroom interiors: baths, basins, toilets. Here, practicality is capitalized. Toilets, for example, should be robust, easy to clean, anatomically designed, smooth, economic in use of water. In Austria – unlike in other Western countries – the customer likes to be able to admire his production before the produced item vanishes in the Orcus loo. Foreigners find that strange : they would rather not know this at all! Of course only confirmed esoterics came on the idea that such a loo changes one's character, whether a pope or a dictator shits in it “A loo is a loo is a loo” Gertrude Stein would probably have said...

Yet it was a WC out of context – “the thing in itself” – which caused a forward-looking revolution in art : the influential painter and guru Marcel Duchamp, futurist, cubist and surrealist, convinced the intellectuals at that time that a loo estranged by an artist's hand could change one's character and could be transformed into a work of art! So he opened the door wide to all the later arrangers of objects and assemblage makers that were to follow.

Once the futurists had scattered manifestos by the barrel throughout the world, declaring that they were banishing not only speed and movement in the picture, but

also any kind of idea showing contempt for women, loyalty to Mussolini, glorification of war or power, this was to be detrimental to them later. On the other hand Duchamp's ideas were propagated and are probably still influential. I assume that the proliferation of today's pseudo directions, philosophies and cults, which the poor works of art needlessly bring out, is waste products v. Duchamp's thoughts. Confidence tricksters and jokers are happily revived, and often put down art as rubbish.

Not that I doubt that many artists use something that puts their thoughts in motion, whether it is the smell of a bad apple, rolling on the floor when painting, screeching of trams, sacred ideologies, political protest, beliefs, alcohol, drugs, sociological matters...(so many make a good living from it, immediately seizing and emulating every modern-fashionable emotion, in the hope that their creator will be celebrated)...but ultimately there is only one thing that is important: TALENT.

The sustainability of a direction will be determined by the TALENT of the person who adopts it, not by the direction itself. In addition all of us – progressive or traditional – are in the grip of a force [sic] which imprints its stamp on us, whether we believe we should go with it or not : the TIME in which we work. It stamps everything that we are and do, every script, every ornament...Its grip appears to be getting even tighter, the deeper it slips into the past, where it keeps gnawing away retroactively, the things that develop in it fade into insignificance.

What will endure, no-one can in any event foretell.

On this note: it would be lovely if you have the means and space to purchase one of my pieces of work, if your grandchildren would gain from it...But it would be much better if YOU enjoyed it! The grandchildren will in any event develop a quite different taste : they must of course appreciate the art that will be around in 50 years !

FACIT

TO HELL WITH THE GRANDCHILDREN !!!!!

Vienna, Sept 2002

Translator's note: some of the German is colloquial or mixed with other languages