

A PROJECT FOR THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM in view of the last great World Art Exhibition, the biannual film festival of Venice founded in the year 1895, and therefore with its roots still going back to the previous century, is faced with the trends that were appearing then, which should reach into the next century and thus present the prelude for the new century. Much criticized and often abused, sometimes even condemned to destruction, it still exerts a huge influence on the interested art world, on artists such as gallery owners, on museum personnel such as simple recipients. This time there are two apparently opposite concepts on the programme. The total show of 102 international artists created by the Exhibition Commissioner, Harald Szeemann under the designation “dAPERTutto” (Aperto everywhere) and the traditional art scene presented by the individual countries in their own pavilion.

At the great exhibition a critic (Vitus H. Weh Document No. 24/99) wrote: “But of most importance is the art of the day. And here, indeed, Szeemann is wrong, as well as all those who think with a long trained reflex that national principle would be obsolete in a multi-cultural world. Exactly the opposite is the case. While ‘Aperto everywhere’ in its concept- free accumulation of idiosyncratic artist statements – and may they still be so impressive – is as irrelevant as other themeless ‘the-whole-works-exhibitions’, the works in the country pavilions are also always understood to be messages: look, this is what France is thinking of presenting this year, also Canada, Japan, Switzerland etc.

Behind these works there are not only individual artists with individual mythologies, but also delicate consensus structures of regional consensus structures, regional museum scenes, the media and cultural and educational policy. The positions presented are not only shown outwardly, but above all are discussed intensively within the countries. In a time that seeks counterbalances to a capitalistic leveling globalisation, that speaks of the principle of confederation and strengthening of regions, such definition possibilities of relevant aesthetic practice are essential. The pavilions of Venice are places where – without enforced consensus – test balloons for the current cultural and political image of a community can be launched.”

It therefore appears that a variety of possibilities can be contrasted with the decreed dominating trend of international marketing strategies, and that – on both large and small scale – it is the individual artist personality that presents questions, statements and solutions in the aesthetic domain across many generations – as in our project – which point from individual and social limitation towards another area of consciousness.

Franz Xaver Schmid

Iris BRENDEL

(photograph)

1929	born in Berlin
1933-51	Buenos Aires, Argentina, teacher, languages
From 1951	Vienna – study at the Academy for Applied Art with Prof. Obsieger. Diploma. Marriage - Daughter, Divorce

Concert trips with the Vienna Chamber Choir and the Academy Chamber Choir in Europe and USA.

Exhibitions in Vienna, Faenza, Cologne, New York, etc.

(photograph)

BEACH LIFE (glazed ceramics – 90 x 40 x 25 cm)

I am aware of breaching two taboos :

- I) I am OLD
- II) I am a CERAMICS ARTIST

The first one you are only allowed to be if you are famous, or contribute to at least one big idea, visibly and audibly a credo: a religion, a party, peace, woman – anything noble...The word CERAMICS ARTIST should be ignored in this country where applied art is ignored and works of clay are “not even ignored” – at best it is rewritten with a name change : “Maker of objects”, “Arranger of fragile pieces”.

Years ago, when a ceramics oven was dismantled in St Margarethen, the sculpting community (from which community I personally knew hardly anyone) rejoiced. You could have thought that the place had been freed from a furuncle ! I do not carry the name “sculptress”, I am rather a figure turner, presser and shaper. (I only work on unused balls of clay).

When I was young, there was the “New Look” and it was long, curly [sic] and by Dior. Stockings had seams, the men in my teenage dreams wore short hair – only artists were allowed at that time to have outlandish hairstyles. CERAMICS had to be above all functional. What has happened in the meantime: The A line, the H line, the “I’ve slept in it for three weeks” line, the pseudo folklore line, the “let-it-all-hang-out” line....skirt lengths have shifted several times from ankles to tree-line and back again, stiletto heels and platforms reached unprecedented heights...and hair? Beards? Afros, “Jesus Hair”... “streaks” came into fashion (in my youth adult nudity prevailed (*illegible.....*))

I remember above all 68 with its anti-war and anti-bomb jeanologies. – Unfortunately I was already too old for this. And today, when I look at bald fifty year old granddads, bursting at the seams, and with a distinctive plait over their fat neck – I think I am almost too young!

Beuy's familiar quotation: "Everyone is an artist" remains to be seen – at least since 68 everyone may look like an artist. And since the punk wave, allover tattoos, piercing and colourful Iroquois hairstyles, everyone can be their own work of art!

And CERAMICS? The unchallenged still rule in the bathroom: Clay toilets and sinks have hardly given way to other materials. And CERAMICS with an artistic claim? Certainly, in Japan a "Trara" is being made a fuss of, that here people are just amazed at. In our latitudes there are really excellent powers, however it is rumoured, that the field of "Ceramics" is shortly to be deleted at the College for Applied Art and replaced by "Design". It almost appears as if the point in exclusive applied art – at one time their "moral": "What looks like a pot, may function as a pot" – is largely ignored. Pot sculptures are for made for the shop window and not for use, relegated to "Object" or revalued (it just depends): is the object indeed a sculpture, ergo value-free. At the same time, in order to make them marketable, objects are decorated with all types of ideological ballast – as if "political correctness" (?) had something to do with talent.

Anyone who is presented in public with their completed works of art, imagines they have earned a place in the sun. I am no exception. May the sun shine favourably on me!

Iris Brendel – Vienna, April 1999