

## About the Origins

By Dr. Bettina Baumgärtel, in: catalogue 'MYRIAM THYES - UMBILDUNGEN', Dusseldorf, Germany, 1996

Art has long lost its innocence, as have its spectators. Today, no picture is pure and original, but it is always a picture inbetween before and after, since there has always been a picture before the picture which will be followed by yet another. Thus it is not surprising that the picture as a pure imitation of reality is no longer believable, it being a mediated, a second-hand product arising from a large supply of given pictures, conceived not only from mass media like newspapers, cinema or TV, but from all imaginable forms of the visual, thus interacting with the flood of mediated pictures and their cultural codes.

Painters of the 1990s try to find a new approach towards the nature of the visual in painting. These newly formulated approaches regard painting as the product of models in two ways: as a model of painting (of what painting could be) and as a model of life. For those still holding on to the fiction of pure art, those who want to see their own art as detached from history as their own creational achievement and who see themselves as the only source of authentic creativity, the discovery of the before-mentioned chain of image-origins may be truly disappointing. For Myriam Thyes the knowledge of pictures having their origin in other pictures is not only self-evident but the principle of her artistic work. Myriam Thyes falls back upon ancient symbols. She finds simple and straight images for complex messages; by using ancient discoveries she looks for easily understandable forms and thus reactivates what is being found and had been lost, yet not without giving it a contemporary meaning. She seeks matriarchal wisdom, transfers relicts of a female-dominated prehistoric times in our present time and declares their timeless validity. With this she shows the awareness for a context-based visuality which proofs her a contemporary representative of the 1990's postmedial art as well as a cosmopolitan, hurrying with huge steps against the flow of the river of oblivion and ambiguity through Extra-European cultures and prehistoric history of women.

Above the glass-and-concrete world of the post-modern architecture of La Défense in Paris float the outlines of African, Egyptian or Greek masks and figures, unreal like bodiless souls or shadowy creatures. In this series of revised photographs, the representatives of ancient cultures seem, at first sight, to have to subordinate themselves under the architectural forms and, on a symbolic level, the colonial power. Looking closer, however, the architecture becomes a background foil. The architectural surface of rectangular patterns fits the body-shapes like a tattoo, making the archaic main motive and La Défense the incidental music, as if the old world had thrust itself over the new world, thus outlasting it, yet being affected by the shapes of the new world's military power.

The artist's large paintings, drawn with great technical perfection, are full of a meditative silence, yet they do not form a naïve counter-world to the quickly changing images of the new media. They transcend the modern media-world to enter into an archetypal sphere and in transforming this media develop a metalinguistic code. In these paintings, being both remembrances of a lost world and wishful images with utopic content, universal validity is being reclaimed and can be anticipated as a model for life. Typical for the kind of painting of the 1990s, which apart from being concerned with shape also asks for generally intelligible messages and codes, this painting also shows a tendency towards pure sign-language, towards a signet or a quoting short-form. Myriam Thyes' paintings can be called original works for two reasons: not only do they own up to their origins, but they refer to the origins of female life.

With her most recent work, like the 25 video-stills "Sarah", Myriam Thyes reacts to the only recently published pictures of the science-fiction movie "Terminator 2". She takes stills, mostly close-ups of the female protagonist and her male, bodiless counterpart, and, by arranging them like playing cards next to each other, creates a series of expressions like a temperature-range from hot to cold. Thus from the given "originals" new, self-made pictures emerge. In addition to this, the artist unmasks the ancient codes of this seemingly futuristic movie as an anachronistic variation of the Passion and Salvation of Christ.

This principle of visualizing in the context of given images shows Myriam Thyes' way of not only reflecting reality but of creating a new model of an artificial world which has made up its own codes. These codes she decodes, thus creating a more open, more freely available imagery, thereby establishing new codes for various grades of emotions. Incidentally, she transcends painting, entering a way of thinking aside from the pictorial, yet not trespassing the horizon of the visual. Logically, she calls her work transformation, not recreation.

In this indirect way, art and its spectators regain their myth of creation, since forming, be it transforming or creating new things, always requires a creative process, and it seems as if creative activity shows itself best in the act of transforming.

Translation: Anja Gersdorf