

Catalysis

The inspiration for the new set of sculptures by Nina Staehli was the last novel "Pulp" by Charles Bukowski. Whilst the protagonist of the story is dying in his own blood, a red sparrow appears in front of him. These birds are perfectly adapted to civilisation. Wherever there are humans, there are sparrows too. But they enjoy a significant higher status as e.g. the pigeons (also called the rats of the skies).

Sparrows can be metaphorically comprehended as the global population. The word "sparrow" is widely used by human couples or as well a swearword <<Dreckspatz>>. In the 50's an American missile was also called "red sparrow".

There are two ink drawings hanging on the wall, one shows the choreography of sparrows and the other one displays a formation of fighter jets. The jets and sparrows are speeding crisscross over the paper until they end up one after the other in the tiny wooden house. Within the wooden house a mysterious transformation takes place. Amazingly a group of sculptures is then marching out of the shed. Now the fighter jets are turning into even sparrow creatures and the sparrow into uniform human creatures. The connections with the mother house—they could be umbilical cords or power cables— are freshly capped. The figures bend their heads. The seemingly curious look of the sparrow creatures has at the same time something devious and menacing. The humans look, almost depressed, at the floor, but even more they observe the surroundings with deceit-fullness. Shall one trust the loveable side of the creatures or shall one fear the sudden appearance of Mr. Hyde. The Frankenstein Dilemma takes its course. Ambivalent emotions are also caused by the bearlike sculptures which are connected with ropes to the wooden sheds which Nina Staehli has built with driftwood. Also the cute bears bend their heads, as if they would waylay something. They are dressed in a coat which reminds you at the back of the devil's hoof. The bears are called "big boys", a reference to the atomic bomb "Little Boy", dropped by the Americans over Hiroshima. In another installation a shed is hanging on the wall like a birdhouse. Again the sparrow creatures are connected with wires from the floor to the wall via the shed. Some birds on the wall lose their white paint and expose their camouflage below the surface.

The new art installation of Nina Staehli manifests that evil mostly comes in an ambivalent form. One could think of "the wolf in sheep's clothing" as well as of Hannah Arendt's

"banality of evil". We do imagine villains as obscure figures and by no means as friendly neighbours.

The dream of flying not only let us take-off, but also made us invent life-threatening weapons. Within every creature there is an urge for destruction or even self-decomposition in order that something new can be born. It is in this context that we must understand the work title <<catalysis>>; the wooden sheds serve as catalysers.

This makes us think of David Lynch movies', in particular "Lost Highway". In the story the different strings lead to a cabin on stilts. There lives death and the protagonists and the story dissolve in order to be reborn in a new form.

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