

In Enzo's Head - or Enzo Genesis

When you put on the giant plaster head of «Enzo Genesis» by the Swiss artist Nina Staehli, the world is reduced to a few gleaming bright spots that make their way in through small openings. Once inside, the background noise - a soundscape between suppressed roars and rolling, crashing silverware - separates us from our environment, forcing us into a small space where our senses fail us and everything loses its meaning: we're in Enzo Genesis's head. Science fiction writers of the 1950s prophesied that in the future the human brain would be developed most of all, i.e., that its volume would increase so that the skull would be disproportionately large in comparison to the rest of the body, and the body - because of technological progress - would gradually wither away. Today's experts predict the exact opposite: they believe that our brain's development will lag behind due to the widespread use of technologies that replace our mental processes. In other words, our contemporaries say we won't be getting smarter but dumber. In «Enzo Genesis», Staehli seems to unite both prophesies: she has created a being that, despite its abnormally sized head, is fully incapable of coherent thought. According to her, in «Enzo Genesis», what has failed or been destroyed is *the understanding of the relationship between one's own actions and their consequences*. We encounter an individual without a consciousness who wanders through reality like an object among objects, devoid of the *existence* that distinguishes the human being from a passive and manipulable object. Jammed into a head that weighs like a deadly burden, Enzo Genesis moves about completely unresponsive to external stimuli, following only the muddled traces of his inarticulate thought processes. Reality only enters through the small openings, creating a fragmentary mosaic Enzo cannot make heads or tails of, which is why his actions have no connection whatsoever to his surroundings. The retrogression of a living being endowed with intelligence who withdraws ever more into the narrow space of his own autistic world and is increasingly incapable of understanding the concrete consequences of his actions seems to mirror the way human beings deal with their world today: the systematic destruction of the environment, the careless exploitation of raw materials and animal life, the lack of sensibility towards other people's pain and the exponential buildup of arms. The big ideas underlying this piece force us to ask ourselves a dreadful question: Is mankind regressing into an «Enzo Genesis»?

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