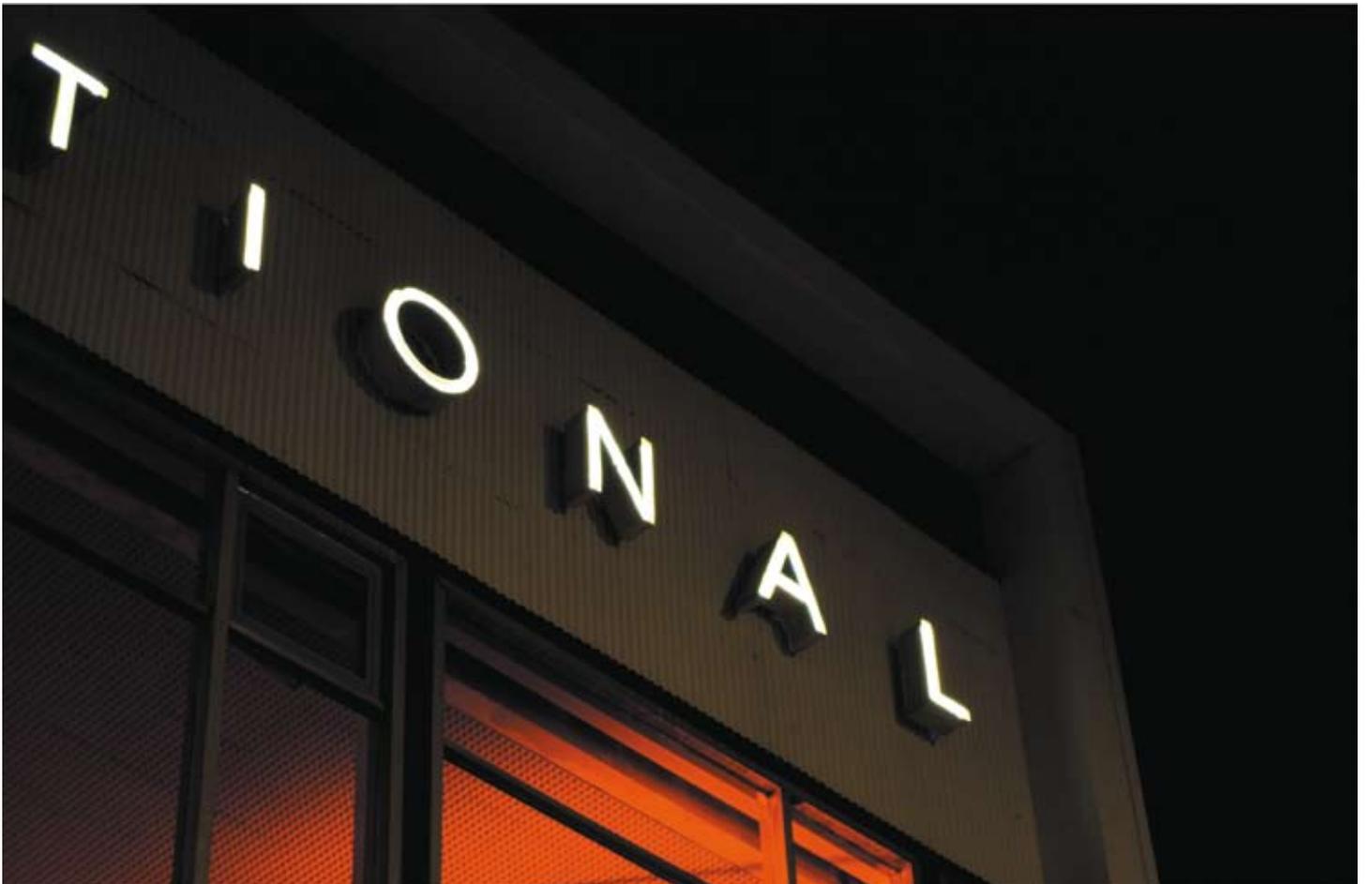


Werner Gasser





kino international





lido, marseille



marseille



ausstellungsansicht aus *memory imprint*, Studio d'Arte contemporanea Pino Casagrande, Roma



studio st.st



juwelia berlin



campus, lake forest



böckhstrasse I, berlin



memories berlin



hände



bread & butter



billy



museum für naturkunde



cookie



sometimes life is quite boring

Werner Gasser: On Grace...

Let us attempt a measure of grace, for once. Grace is a notion that has seemingly gone out of fashion, although it should – why not? – become fashionable once again. By the notion of grace I mean a fascinating ease of movement and at the same time of thought and sensory perception, which communicates itself effortlessly to the observer. Within the photographic works of Werner Gasser lies this measure of grace.

But what then is grace, if it is true that it is an idea that prefers to align itself with beauty, although not in an exclusive manner? What is grace if it proceeds from beauty, and yet produces the effects of beauty, even when beauty itself is absent. What is it then, if beauty can still exist indeed without it, and yet has no attraction except when together with it? Friedrich Schiller, *On Grace and Dignity*, 1793

Grace is a quality that is rare in reality, and thus it gains its legitimacy precisely by its rarity. For Schiller it has a strictly moral connotation: more exactly, sensuousness and an internalized morality balance each other completely, in order to enable free and graceful action. Transferred to our times, one could say that grace is connected to the human dream of flying, with the innate desire to disregard all possible obstacles, not with ultimate power but with infinite ease.

In this sense grace is something exotic. Only in opposition to the exotic, which is filled with many [nonrealistic] images and expectations does grace become an evident quality that one may perceive – with surprise – immediately within another person, within a process, and maybe also within an object. Friedrich Schiller, to whom we are indebted for one of the most important contributions to this topic in his essay “On Grace and Dignity” of 1793, located grace entirely within human activity, namely and exclusively as result of [arbitrary] movement and at the same time as an expression of moral sensibility. However, at this stage we also apply the notion of grace to artistic creations, which is alien to Schiller’s thought. Full apologies for that!

Even though photographs are without a doubt static images, in the case of Werner Gasser they also clearly take into account the principle of movement. Thus, we like to assume that the “moving principle”, as Schiller terms it in reference to the soul, lies within the artist himself, within his artistic intentions. Let us now apply this in the case of concrete works. For example, with Gasser’s ten-part series of “Forbidden Images” which date back to the year 2006. One set of this series is part of the collection of the Museion (Bozen/Bolzano). These colour photographs in 70 x 100 cm format, printed on aluminum dibond, depict museum objects that had previously been presented within exhibitions. Among them is the Apollo from the Belvedere which was exhibited several years ago in the Jewish Museum of Berlin, as part of the highly successful exhibition “Die Macht der Zeichen”. One photo shows a replica of his head, supplied with lines.

In his photo series, Gasser depicts also museum objects that are not allowed to be photographed, as the title suggests. Thus, the photographer merely circumvents a rule that is not unusual within the museum system and is applied primarily because of conservation measures, but also for purposes of copyright. Gasser is able to achieve an aesthetic entirely his own out by overstepping the established order, and despite its unlawful component it displays no heaviness. The Apollo from the Belvedere, through which Felix Klein tried to mathematically discover the secret of beauty in 1898, is depicted in perfectly sharp focus and well-integrated within the composition of the picture, but other images from the series are distinguished by their displacing of detail or by the blurring of the image as a whole.

These photographic “mis-takes” are caused by the velocity with which Gasser takes his photographs, in order to not be discovered, in order to remain within the image: the velocity is required by the artist so as to jump over impeding obstacles without getting into trouble. Thus, the act of blurring, slipping and merging creates a movement of dynamism within the images, achieving in the process a completely unsuspected appeal from such objects as a royal porcelain vase from the Charlottenburg Palace, which might be spectacular for experts but surely not for the average consumer. This is just one example. (Other museum-taken photographs depicting works of art – e.g. the two chandeliers by Rudolf Stingel exhibited in 2010 in the Berlin National Gallery – were evidently taken in different conditions and are crystal clear as images).

The component of movement within Gasser’s work depends on the way in which the artist composes his pictures. They are recurrently realized as two-piece images and work with several strong elements that are distributed across the surface in order to set the eye in motion. This effect is also increased by the fact that Gasser works almost entirely with colour photography, which concedes to the depicted objects the sensuous colourful quality of everyday life instead of rendering them abstract through the use of black and white. The colourfulness of the selected details within the work of Werner Gasser is characterized by a certain ease: as a tendency this recalls not so much the strong saturated colours of high-contrast combinations, but rather – we might say – the colours of the first bloom of springtime.

It is remarkable that such a special quality as grace could stray so far out of focus. Nevertheless, it comes recurrently to the surface. On the highest level, for example, in regard to an artist like Henri Matisse. Considering the era in which his works were created, he was blamed over and over again of refusing to confront reality. Or in regard to Alexander Calder, whose sculptures created in the 1950s and 1960s contain the principle of motion in a rather realistic way; but also in some of the light-work pieces of Otto Piene from circa 1960. Grace is present also today. Perhaps in some video works of Pippilotti Rist. Or within the performance of a dancer whose movement is not qualified by a touch of irony, but instead intensified. Or within the photographs of Werner Gasser, whose meanings, I believe, are in terms of narrative not easy to define. The actual significance of his works consists in the sense of gesture inherent to them, which is to say, in their sense of grace. And herein consists – in my opinion – the unique character of these photographs. A critical virulence can occur, if grace is applied as a heuristic device of analogy - in order to see exactly where grace is lacking.

Werner Gasser

1969 born in Meran (Italy), 1984 Artistic educational establishment in St. Ulrich Gröden, 1990 University for Music and Visual Arts "Mozarteum" in Salzburg, 1992 Academy for the Fine Arts, Vienna, Master Class Michelangelo Pistoletto, 1993 Study in New York, 1996 Degree at the Academy for the Fine Arts, Vienna, 1998 Study Grant for New York, 2003/04 Study Grant for Berlin, lives and works in Berlin and Meran.

Exhibitions

2011 International Biennale of Photography Alessandria, **2010** Nobody with Book Introduction "gender", Gallery Prisma (SKB), Bolzano, **2009** Conflicts or the Presence in the Past. Third Price at the Competition of the Durst Fototechnik AG, Tammerburg, Lienz, New entries Museion, Museum for Modern and Contemporary Art, Bolzano **2008** horizon Emmanuel Walderdorff Art Gallery, Cologne, (International Photostage, Cologne) tra-monti Gallery Museum AR/GE Kunst, Bolzano (manifesta 7 parallel events), Focus MLAC, Museum Laboratory for Contemporary Arts, University "La Sapienza" Rome, memory imprint Contemporary Art Studio Pino Casagrande (in the frame of FotoGrafia. International Festival of Photography) Rome, **2007** Preview, the emerging artfair 07, Berlin, Rosengarten Gallery Antonella Cattani, Contemporary Art, Bolzano, Magie Real Gallery artMbassy, Berlin, rien nul (Videoinstallation/ Music of Oliver Korte, for the Conference Hall. Configurations of esthetic experience, with Georges Didi-Hubermann, Gert Mattenklott ...), Academy for Arts in Berlin and Osnabrück, arte fiera Bologna, art first_07, **2006** Kunststart Bolzano (I), scope artfair 06, London (E), new builds, Gallery artMbassy, Berlin, Objektive Südtirol Säulenhalle of the Austrian Parliament, Vienna, uncertain location NIU Art Museum, Northern Illinois University DeKalb/ Chicago IL, (USA), (Catalogue), Berlin/Chicago H. Sonnenshine Gallery Lake Forest, Chicago IL (USA), Vissidarte International Art and Performance Festival, Meran, minimal - Kunst am Bau Raiffeisenbank Naturns, modus - Kunst am Bau of the new Health and Social Forces Naturns, scope NY06, New York (USA), Vorbidden Pictures, Gallery Les chances de l'art, Bozen, artMbassy@Premium Station (Berlin fashion week), **2005** location matters, Gallery artMbassy, Berlin, Preview Berlin_ the emerging art fair, Backfabrik Berlin (28.09.-02.10.05), the Fence Park of the Thirst Grounds Lien, Nobody, Gallery con|temporary, Berlin (23.06.-23.07.05), Transversale - Reconnaissance in Art and Sciences (Catalogue) Revue annuelle européenne / An European Yearbook with Texts from Franck Hoffmann), **2004** Space Sentences Containerinstallation Exhibition Centre, Bolzano, Focused showroom Chiara Marzi, Berlin, Cologne video night Gallery Emanuel Walderdorff, Cologne, 29.10.2004, try to smell loop, A Space for actual Art (guestroom), Berlin, **2003** Arte Fiera Bologna, art has a point, warm up galleria neon, Bologne, Art Innsbruck 2003, for the special Show Young Art, Focused_2 Gallery Emanuel Walderdorff, Cologne (Catalogue with Text from Andreas Spiegl and Franck Hoffmann), Panorama 03. Junge Kunst Südtirol/Young Art Südtirol, Former Post Building at the Bolzano Station, In front of the World the contemporary Portrait in the photographic medium, Museum for Contemporary Arts in Villa Croce, Genoa, 03.06.-14.09.03 Kunst am Bau (Kunst am Bau of the new Health and Social Forces Naturns) 28, Austrian Grafic Context, Innsbruck 2003 Gallery at the Taxispalais, Innsbruck 25.10.-05.11.03 (Catalogue), Südtiroler Art Institute, Bolzano 25.03.-23.04.04, Urban Gallery Linz, silex thousand fires (with lucid21) A9 Forum, Transeuropa, Museumsquartier Vienna, 07.12.-14.12.03 *in Südtirol, lives in Vienna Südtiroler Culture Week Vienna, Gallery Museum Call for 16.11.-02.02.02 Project Schwaz Ost, Gallery of the City Schwaz, Südtiroler Art today Gallery M-ART, Vienna, Focused 1, (with Elisabeth Hölzl) Gallery Les Chances de l'Art, Bolzano, Gallery Museum AR/GE Art Bolzano, bigprints in the open Space of the City Bolzano, 19.09.-19.10.02 (Catalogue with Text von Andreas Spiegl) Hamburg Bolzano, The absurd famous Phoenix Art foundation, Collection Falckenberg, Hamburg (Catalogue with Texts from Anne-Marie Melster/ Sabine Gamper/Letizia Ragaglia) Artist Bridges Druso Bridge, Bolzano, 28.11.02-15.01.03 (Catalogue with Text from Letizia Ragaglia) **2001** listening to the red Light- and Videoinstallation, old Nursing Home, Meran, 16.03.-18.03.00 (Catalogue Click here with Text from Valerio Dehó) Radar Photo Works and Videos in Alto Adige, Civic Gallery/Stadtgalerie Bolzano, 28.06.-09.09.01 (Catalogue Radar with Texts from Letizia Ragaglia/Edith Moroder), Transart new Festival for the Contemporary Art, Videoinstallation for firemusic-sancte michael Hall of Industry Bolzano, 22.09.01 Wonderful Life Book presentation at the Gallery Museum AR/GE Art Bolzano, 26.10.01 HUA, Ó artoteca, Milano, 06.10.-14.10.01 **2000** the peak and the horizon palazzo Trentini Trento, 18.04.-13.05.99 (Catalogue with Texts from Vittoria Coen/Giovanna Nicoletti) Contribution to unknown vegetables Milan, one Week Studio Gerber 43 Bolzano, 05.05.-13.05.00, Contribution to Arunda Edition Nr. 53 Milk, Contribution to the Magazine Kulturelemente Nr. 19/2000, to be continued ambulantes Project of Exhibition from August 2000 until March 2001 - the Project is arranged by ArtFORUM Gallery Meran, Steghof Naturns, Gallery Prisma Bolzano, Gallery Museum AR/GE Art Bolzano, Museion Museum for Modern and Contemporary Art Bolzano, Südtiroler Kulturinstitut **1999** multiples ArtFORUM Gallery Meran, 01.12.-31.12.99 **1998** Contribution to Arunda Ausgabe Nr. 48, at upper way, Project Art Semperdepot Vienna, Autumn 98 1997 ID ArtFORUM Gallery Meran, 07.02.-

01.03.92 Contemporary Holy Art in Val Venosta at Museum Schluderns in Val Venosta, 20.09.-26.10.97 ARTtrans - Regulation of the Space, Art Gallery Kammerhof in Gmunden, 31.05.-06.06.97 **1996** Art Project Museum of Contemporary Art Pecci Prato, biennale of Florence, Summer 96 (Catalogue with Texts from Michelangelo Pistoletto) Moment Picture Vienna, Considerations about the Austrian Culture Staatstheater Ville de Luxembourg, 14.11.-24.11.96 Presentation of the Degree Works with a Distinction Semperdepot Vienna, June 96 **1995** Art Project Marstall München, Autumn 95 Art Project - Prologue 3. Evening object/dress/food Academy for the Fine Arts Vienna, 20.03.-26.03.95 9, Liechtensteinerstraße 58 Door 10 one Week 24 Hours nonstop Art, Vienna, 20.03.-26.03.95 Sequence Gallery Museum AR/GE Art Bolzano 07.07.-05.08.95 International Symposium of Sculpture Art Gallery Sypca Brno - (CR) 03.06.-16.07.95 it seems to be Hall of the Academy for the Fine Arts Vienna, 26.05.-30.05.95 **1994** First Substance Installation, Footbridge Naturns, 04.08.-06.09.93 (Catalogue First Substance with Texts from Michelangelo Pistoletto/Gerhard Mumelter) **1993** Renewed Spaces Academy for the Fine Arts Vienna, 26.-29.01.93 The changing fields Installation Atelier Michelangelo Pistoletto, Vienna, 08.03.-12.03.93 panorama & Panorama Art Gallery Klemens Gasser Bolzano, 11.09.-12.10.93 Panorama, Young Art in Südtirol Exhibition Centre Bolzano, (Catalogue with Texts from Walter Guadagnini/Marion Piffer/Franz Thaler) **1992** Felt Stones and Rowan berries Installation Footbridge Naturns, Italy

