

Andrea Hanak – Under The Open Sky (Unter freiem Himmel)

2nd February – 25th March 2017

Under The Open Sky is Andrea Hanak's first exhibition at Galerie Françoise Heitsch. Andrea Hanak shows oil paintings, collages, and other works on paper. Furthermore, two benches are placed in the space, which seem to invite the audience to take a seat. Unlike common museum benches, these objects deny the gallery visitor their intended use. They invite to contemplate the seen as implied by the title *Under The Open Sky* instead. The seating surfaces are covered with mirrors, the remaining surfaces are painted in the colour of the sky by day and night respectively. With every look in one of the horizontal mirrors the space's ceiling and everything that lies below appear upside down. Thus, top and bottom as well as light and darkness become to also represent a cosmic duality. This experience is accessible not through the sky, but through a piece of furniture. Consequently, proximity and distance become another duality. A position – a seating area – after stripping it from its commonly known usage is provided with new prospects.

The day-time bench is placed upstairs, the bench for the night downstairs. Although the actual setting is supposed to be *Under The Open Sky*, Andrea Hanak is still able to respond to Galerie Françoise Heitsch's own spatial setting and form. The space upstairs, which through its windows on street level can be overviewed in its entirety from the Amalienstraße is connected through the gallery's elegant staircase with a space of the same size downstairs. Through an opening in the architectural setting, daylight reaches from the window all the way down. Accordingly, Hanak displays oil paintings upstairs and collages downstairs. Additionally, the brush drawing printed on the invitation and two folded leaves, painted with oil paint in monochrome yellow and red, are on display. The invitation is reminiscent of the poetic cosmos, which was displayed by Hanak at the Lenbachhaus in Munich in 2005. In comparison, the two leaves may appear to be formulated in a reduced and constructive manner, their positioning, i.e. decentralised from the extreme, however, lead back to this very cosmos.

The various works are not only formal but also connected through their motivic depiction. Even the benches, which appear impersonal, reveal their actual function as soon as the spectator is able to see him-/herself in the mirrors. For the motives for face or plant remain the same even if they appear formally as round or rhombus-shaped, and almond-like. Like words they retain their character even if they resonate or enter compositions, even if they dynamically radiate from a centre point or unfold towards a single direction. The connection with the motives is not broken by the gallery space. The motives remain present even if they are represented merely as a principle and as versatile as a dictionary. The yellow leaf *Sunday [Sonntag]*, attached to the ceiling unfolds its centre through simple bends, which cross the middle horizontally, vertically, and diagonally. In comparison, the collages downstairs seem to introduce the entire vocabulary applied in the oil paintings above.

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The space, which *Under The Open Sky* describes, is known as en plein air in the history of painting. But Andrea Hanak does not paint en plein air. There is no way that leads from her images to Munich's light or to the light of Florence, where Hanak stayed in the Villa Romana in 2006. There is no light that would not be the colours' light itself. What Hanak's paintings do have in common with en plein air however is the fact that both are painted with oil colours. En plein air was common only during a few decades before the age of Modernity. Yet, the perception that the painter of *Outdoor Breakfast [Frühstück im Freien]* was present still exists. Andrea Hanak turns this exception into a rule by introducing reality and vividness into the image plane with her own means. This is why it is possible to say that her exhibition really does take place *Under The Open Sky* at the Galerie Françoise Heitsch.

Berthold Reiß