

BQ

Philipp Gufler „Romankreisen“

Opening: Friday, 24.03.2017

Exhibition: 25.03.–15.04.2017

„The whole novel touches its own page bottom and turns to the next page“
Hubert Fichte on his literary project *Die Geschichte der Empfindlichkeit*²

The title of Philipp Gufler's first show at BQ borrows a term from the German novelist and ethnographer Hubert Fichte (1935 – 1986). Fichte associated this literal translation from Greek with the concept of a circular novel, which in its course returns to the point of departure. In his show, Gufler adapts Fichte's thought as the conceptual idea of an abstract, orbital movement to reflect on exemplary themes, methods and forms that feature in his body of work. The artist book *Indirekte Berührung / Indirect Contact* forms the central piece of the exhibition and relates its elements in the form of a logbook. The installation includes mirrors that have been transformed with transparent colour pigments as well as layered fabrics with varying prints. These quilts are hung in the space and also constitute a separate space within the gallery. The last element is an acrylic glass showcase onto which the documentation of a previous performance is projected.

Making use of screen-printing on blue and pink plastic film with spiral binding (a technique which features prominently in his works), Gufler's prose also takes a shape in which enables its haptic qualities to be experienced. Within these pieces, the reader encounters different characters, some of whom have inspired and influenced Gufler's artistic production for a long time. They all position themselves on a fictional time scale, stretching from 1597 – the year in which the early baroque painter Caravaggio supposedly started work on his *Narcissus* – up to 2075 – the future year in which the performance *een gebeueren*, enacted in 1975 by the Dutch artist Ben d'Armagnac (1940 – 1978), will see its 100th anniversary. Besides locating these two artistic positions that are of personal relevance for Gufler, the years also serve as markers for a wide spectrum of reference points in his works that are often based on artistic research. All major characters – researchers, writers and artists alike – share a fundamentally critical attitude towards the norms of their time, putting into question cultural, political and sexual identity.

Indirect Touch allows historic figures and contemporaries of Gufler to meet outside the boundaries of chronological order. Gufler gives them an indirect voice in the form of appropriated fragments (which cannot be identified as citations in all cases). However, he does not merely cite or reproduce these characters but rather condenses the attitudes associated with or expressed by them. In the process of indirect writing, Gufler repeatedly seems to merge with his characters. The persona that links all 21 chapters is *Jäcki*, based on the gay flaneur and writer-protagonist from Hubert Fichte's novel *Palette* (1968). Like Fichte, Gufler makes use of the character Jäcki as screen as well as ambivalent Doppelgänger (who never fully becomes the alter ego). The character Jäcki becomes a medium for repeated autobiographical passages that may be subtly woven into the text but may also dominate whole chapters.

Gufler's literary and artistic self-assessments are indirect yet at the same time true to the principle 'Put your self in quotation marks – call yourself a novel'³. The Fichte quote from *Versuch über die Pubertät*⁴ (1974), parts of which Gufler previously used in an exhibition title, illustrates a decidedly self-critical distance towards an up-close autobiographical approach. That same principle also governs Gufler's installations and performances. His approaches to a choice of characters from a long tradition of emancipatory history are marked by the artistic pursuit of deeper involvement in regards to emotions and content. Gufler temporarily merges with his subjects of study and, in doing so, self-referentially reveals a fundamental difference between those subjects and himself.

Philipp Fürnkäs

¹ Orbiting of the novel

² The History of Sensibility

³ „Setz dein Ich in Führungsstriche – nenn dich Roman“

⁴ Essays on Puberty

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