

KÖNIG GALERIE

ANSELM REYLE REFLECTIONS

8 JUNE - 4 AUGUST 2019
ST. AGNES | CHAPEL
OPENING: 7 JUNE, 7-9 PM

Why is Anselm Reyle painting watercolors?

by Rafael Horzon

Recently, when Anselm Reyle invited people to his property on the Spree River for an open house, I went along too. I wanted to see his villa, I wanted to swim, I wanted to eat and drink for free.

Over three hundred guests had come, not only from Berlin, but also from next door, and next door is the water police. And so it came to be that I was standing in line at the grill behind two uniformed officers of the water police and eavesdropped on the following conversation:

Officer 1: "Somehow the party's not getting going, and we've been here for five minutes already ..."

Officer 2: "Ja, at the very least ..."

"Look at that: that table over there with the potato salad. It's covered with gold foil."

"Yeah, and?"

"Well, get this: it's the same stuff that Reyle uses for his foil paintings!"

"Really?"

"I am sure of it! We were just in his studio, and we saw this big roll of gold foil. That's the same foil!"

"Hmm, you're probably right. It's weird that he is using the same foil as a tablecloth for the sausages... "

"Actually, what do you make of Reyle's stuff?"

"I don't know, I'm not so sure. It's always so shiny and colorful, and somehow ... superficial ..."

"Now, now, we've seen him a couple of times, just the other day when he lent us his lawnmower. I don't think he's superficial at all. "

"Him not, of course, but his art. Everything is obsessed with surfaces!"

"But don't you get it? He's celebrating the surface! It's sort of like an over-affirmation that you have to read ironically."

"I don't know..."

"Of course! It's like that Warhol saying, 'Just look at the surface of my paintings, and there I am. There's nothing behind it.' "

"Yeah, I know but that's exactly what I mean!"

"Man, Jürgen. You really don't understand. You seriously cannot believe that Warhol really meant that."

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Suddenly then, the two officers turned to me:

Officer 1: "Um, excuse me, but the line's not gonna get any faster with you breathing down our backs!"

Me: "But I'm not doing anything!"

Officer 2: "Yeah, right. You're shoving up against us the whole time with that weird snorting of yours! "

At that moment, Anselm Reyle approached us and I held him by the arm: "Tell me, the gold foil here on the table under the sausages, is that the same foil you're using for the paintings?"

"What? Oh, the gold foil? I don't know, wait a minute, there's Johann, he's just arrived! With Daniel Birnbaum! On the boat! I'll see you later."

Meanwhile, the line at the grill had yet to move an inch further. The two policemen were giving me snide looks and whispering something about me. Then they continued their conversation.

Officer 1: "Say, have you seen Reyle's most recent work? The watercolors?"

Officer 2: "Huh? Watercolors?"

"Yup. He's painting copies of his foil paintings, the crumpled gold foil... with incredible accuracy."

"What? Why is Reyle doing watercolors?"

"You remember when he had just set up his workshop here, two or three years ago, and I had come over because of the telescopic hedge trimmer."

"Yeah and?"

"And he had just proclaimed his withdrawal from the art world."

"I remember, yeah, we had all read that interview at the guardhouse back then ..."

"Exactly... And for a while there, he really did do nothing other than mow the lawn and landscape the garden and stuff. But when I was with him, he also told me that he was working - in secret, so to speak, like Duchamp on his last work - on quite different things."

"Like what?"

"He started doing pottery."

"Oh right. Those huge malformed vases."

"Exactly. And that's when he started doing the watercolors."

"Pottery and watercolors, pretty strong stuff."

"He even started making tapestries..."

"Uff..."

"Yes, I think that after all those stripe paintings and heavy-gloss sculptures, he wanted to go in another direction. He deliberately wanted to go... where it hurts. "

"What do you mean?"

"He wanted to go... to Tuscany. Pottery and watercolor painting... "

"Ah, I get it..."

"And yet it's Reyle all over again. He even has that signature of his, you know the one. The one which always consists of a few splashes of paint and a ring imprint, as if he had accidentally placed an overflowed paint can down on top of the painting ... "

"Right, but what do you want to say?"

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"So, now he has this same signature on his watercolors, in the form of a red wine circle, as if he was sipping a glass of red wine and accidentally sat it down on the watercolor..."

"Oh my God, that's just too good."

"Funny, right?"

At this point I'd really had enough of these wise-crack, pretentious police officers. Bitterly, I left the grounds just in time to see my car, which I had parked in the flower bed of the water police station, being towed away right before my eyes.

With the dreamy setting sun behind him, in the distance I could make out how Anselm Reyle, sitting on his dock, beret on his head, took a deep pleasurable sip of red wine and then put his glass carefully down on the watercolors laid out in front of him.

Translated by April von Stauffenberg