

Werner Tammen (Galerie Tammen & Partner, Berlin)

**Laudatory speech for the close of the exhibition *Surprise***

**Dietmar Brixy and special guest: Patricia Waller**

18.10.2015

I've just arrived back from Berlin where our eight-week exhibition (with Brixy) came to an end yesterday. And while we're on the subject of Berlin, I would like to briefly tell you a few facts about the city:

There are 400 galleries in Berlin. They host 3,000 exhibitions a year, covering 60,000 square meters of floor space. Together, they practically make up the largest museum in the city. If we suppose that each of these galleries represents about ten to fifteen artists, then we have 4,000 to 6,000 artists, whom we, these galleries, are actively trying to bring into the 'business'. That is an insane number that might possibly seem alarming at first. But it has to be said in response: within the context of the so-called 'cultural economy', a welcome shift in the perception of art has been taking place for at least 15 years now. Because everyone who is active in this area is actually interested in art per se. And we, as galleries, have the job of answering the question: how do we successfully bind those interested in art to our programmes? A welcome change then, on which we are trying to build. And I believe that here (at the Altes Pumpwerk and with this event), we have a great sample of all these people who are interested in art per se.

When I got back to the Altes Pumpwerk yesterday evening, I have to say my jaw nearly dropped yet again. But that is of course the whole point of coming here, isn't it? I do believe the exhibition is called *Surprise* after all.

We are thus supposed to be surprised by the concept that Dietmar Brixy has realised here with his partner and team. His work, his painting has now been discussed by many people. There is a great statement in the new big catalogue of your – Dietmar's – work by Dr. Lorenz from the Kunsthalle here in Mannheim, for example. It is very impressive how effectively the museum director writes about Brixy's work and how she points out, for instance, that here (at the Altes Pumpwerk) we are witnessing a very special example of a cohesive artistic existence. One which is marked by a stimulating 'sensuality' that has the potential to make us feel 'unsettled'.

That's how I experience it, too; every time I come in here I feel slightly 'unsettled'. Not only because I have to contemplate what I'll take with me to the next event. But the way in which Brixy always manages, every year without fail, to capture a 'new world-drama' on the canvas is, I believe, also very special.

As a viewer, you really need to make the effort to explore each individual work in detail. To see what has changed. How Brixy has succeeded again with these new works to create abstract spaces. How the sheer boldness of his painting creates secrets, concealing even how each picture was made. I, too, am constantly surprised and have to ask, 'Tell me, how did you do that again?'

What emerges here time and again is absolutely fascinating and actually demonstrates how Brixy reinvents himself, every year anew. I believe this is a criterion that also says something about how good an artist is.

An additional quality of Brixy, one that he has already referred to himself, is that he invites guest artists to exhibit here at the Altes Pumpwerk. This year it's Patricia Waller. There is a fitting quote from the author Heinrich Böll. He believed that every artist had to "have the right dose of anarchy in him if he wants to be a good artist."

I think that when it comes to the artistic development of Patricia Waller, it was somehow a pretty major dose. Her works are markedly provocative and highly unusual. Not simply because of the traditional bias such techniques face: she's a woman, she crochets, she knits.

When you delve further into her catalogue you will discover that the tone of the art critics with regard to this subject has, thank God, changed completely now and even such prestigious names as Simon Bourgeois have commented positively on these kinds of techniques. Because, for one, such techniques have an anticipatory element; for instance, in how the needle has been used here. Another anticipatory element is evident in how Patricia Waller attempts to address topical issues.

Triviality as a topic. We are in fact confronted with it repeatedly every single day. Whether we go to IKEA, Bauhaus, Mediamarkt or some other store. We are surrounded by trivial art. And it is legitimate that Patricia Waller takes up depictions, for example, of children, of children's heroes in her work. Because these, without a doubt, are the most meaningful surfaces onto which emotions can be projected.

Of course we react. When we learn about social grievances. About violence, aggression, acts of cruelty that occur day-in, day-out. When we question ourselves about artistic endeavours. And for me Patricia Waller does this in a very special way that is not just exclusive to German art. For the phenomenon of artists again experimenting with these techniques and attempting to take a closer look at social conditions has since become an international phenomenon.

Looking now at both artists overall, the following phrase seems apt: 'art comes from art'. Which of course usually describes how each generation of artists should respond to the one that preceded it. How they should deal with it. How they saw the world. And here we have two representatives, of painting, of sculpture, who find their answers in thousand-year-old techniques.

And the special significance of this is related in turn to the globalised art market in which we are, fortunately, active, thus bringing me back to the beginning of my speech. Fortunate, in that we discover things about other cultures much more quickly and easily, something that was not possible in this way before. At the same time, however, we observe how the news of conflicts around the world now reaches our homes on the hour every hour. And comes in the guise, most prevalent at present – we are all preoccupied with it, and with the impact that we see on our doorsteps – in the guise of religious convictions. Convictions that are ultimately also intent on formulating an attack on our understanding of culture, something with which we have to engage.

Here (at the Altes Pumpwerk) we are, I believe, in an extraordinary place; that's what went through my head again yesterday when I walked into the building. Here, we have a perfect example of the social consensus, of how we attempt to understand art and culture. And how we attempt to live with it on a daily basis. And in the ideal scenario, take it home with us, hang it on the wall and keep on engaging with it there.

In this sense, it is a wonderful island refuge that exemplifies, for me personally but perhaps for you as well, how we should approach culture today in our society. And how we should foster it. So that it continues to permeate our consciousness and remains there, evolving ever further.

I hope that in this sense you enjoy your time here and the opportunity we have been given to discover the work of these two artists – and to let their art resonate with us long after today. Have a great afternoon, thank you.