

Communicating signs

by Maike Rößiger

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Her pictures are collages and her collages are pictures. They are pictures reflecting more than one layer, pictures which are appealing in their aesthetic. Pictures that do not only affect your senses but make sense as well. Pictures that invite you to approach them from different angles.

Christine Düwel creates picture cycles whose titles are already evocative: *Im Rhythmus der Zeit* (In the Rhythm of Time) *Zwischenstück* (Intermediate piece), *Ins Blaue gedacht* (Random thought), *Gedankenwellen* (Thoughtwaves), *Klangfarben* (Acoustic colours), to name just a few of them.

At the same time poetic and playful, Christine Düwel merges paper with words, words with colours, colours with lines, lines with pieces of sheet music, and sheet music with drawings.

The artist's preoccupation with sign systems and perceptions has been an ongoing one. Her studies of Art history and Philosophy in Berlin and the years in the master class of Alfred Hrdlickas in Vienna have shaped her artistic expression, thereby laying the foundation for her current works. The interplay between the graphic elements and philosophical thought is apparent in all of Christine Düwel's work. The path is part of the destination, the creative process is therefore as important as the finished work.

Beyond the aesthetic demands that are always primarily made on a work of art, there are the individual – carefully selected and balanced - components that are characteristic of the picture, the collage. If a single element was to be absent from the composition or altered in its position on the paper, the picture's overall effect would inevitably change. Arranging different materials that were previously placed in a different context is an intrinsic aspect of these pictures or collages.

The basis of all of Christine Düwel's collages is *Büttenpapier* (mould made paper), together with other handmade unbleached papers as well as scraps of tissue paper, all of which change their colour space with each cycle. Overlaying, treating and contrasting these materials with the other elements in the picture generates tensions that permit the colour contrasts to interplay within the pictorial space.

All written words Christine Düwel uses in her collages are quotes by philosophers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Hannah Arendt, among others. Arendt in particular has left early an

impression on the thoughts and works of the artist that are evident in the questions on reasoning, judging and very existence that Düwel addresses in her pictures. The presence of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* as well as his analytical thoughts on language and logic can be traced in more than one picture cycle. The selection of quotes focus on language and signs, the relationship between text and image, thinking and doing.

Music has been Christine Düwel's constant companion, an enrichment of her life, a personal experience and finally yet importantly a dominant feature of her works. This purely sonic medium is transferred into the visual realm by fragments of notations, bits of sheet music, or single notes that have escaped from their stave and are leading an existence of their own until paintings are almost be audible. These extracts from the oeuvres of predominantly contemporary composers intermingle with the colours and shapes, lines and words. As it were, they set the beat of the picture and suffuse it with rhythm.

The impact of the history of European art is prominent in a number of pictures, such as for instance the cycle called *Venus im Gespräch mit Ludwig W.* (Venus in conversation with Ludwig W.). Venus, the Roman equivalent to the Greek Aphrodite stands as a symbol for beauty, love, seduction or sensuality. Her nudity and myth has been captivating people of all ages and are now reminding the beholder of the sensual and erotic depictions in the famous paintings of Titian, Giorgione, Velázquez, and Goya among other artists. Is it the music in whose rhythm the Venus is swaying, or is she responding to the words in the picture?

Another, essential feature of Christine Düwel's paintings are the lines of black and sometimes coloured Chinese ink. They can be interpreted as a metaphor for live which is swinging and pulsating on all levels, starting with our heartbeat and ending with interpersonal relationships. The lines are injecting live into the paintings, an energetic force that is reminiscent of everything from small eddies to graphs and seismographic records, the visible vibrations of music. At the same time, they represent the waves of thought that connect the individual elements of the collage.

It is the bridges she succeeds in building between the visual arts, philosophy and music that are essential to Christine Düwel and her works. By entering into a two-way communication with various means of artistic expression and sign systems, she is able to develop a playful yet sensitive image of the things that influence and move her.

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