

EMIL TOMAN (1923–2007)

Interestingly, Emil Toman is shown in an exhibition about figurative art. Interesting because Toman's artistic home is located in all art-historical/critical texts in the Informel, "of absolute non-representationalism", and is mentioned in one go with names like Mark Rothko or Wolfgang Hollegha.

In fact, the majority of Toman's work is in the non-representational realm. Toman was deeply convinced of the connectedness of all being, of the individual as an inseparably connected part of an all-encompassing wholeness in constant interaction, change, development. The rigidity of the "painted" object did not seem to him to correspond to the dynamic reality of perception and being per se, instead, he set out in search of possibilities to approach an all-embracing absolute in his pictorial work. His work was always characterized by a deep spirituality, a close connection to nature, and the attempt to make his view of the world (or the universe) visually perceptible to the viewer.

At the same time, Toman's irrepressible love of freedom and curiosity, the will to constantly change, were typical characteristics of his personality. Dogmas did not fit into his world view which was much too broadly conceived for that, and so Toman did not submit to the dogma of non-representationalism. In his holistic view, representational form and inspiringly received form could stand side by side equivalently. In both cases, Toman tried to arrive at the absolute pictorial formula possible through reduction and concentration in order to bring out the essence

His female and male figures allow us to sense this essential, absolute. The drawings are not portraits of specific persons but expressions of the feminine and masculine in themselves. Formally reduced to outlines, they carry something universal, prototypical within them. At the same time, they give the impression of being bursting with a joy of life, freedom, self-confidence, fertility, and vitality. In their opulence and earthy power, they are reminiscent of archetypal figures such as the Venus of Willendorf. Toman awakens them from their petrification and lets them jump away elated.

Clara Kaufmann, Art historian
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