

Walter Angerer-Niketa: The violent power of quiescence

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Something outrageous had happened. The flock of apes was all turmoil. No end to their screeching. A black monolith had appeared, the stony opposite of the organic material the world was made of thousands of years ago. Black, cool stone, right angles, strict geometry! Nothing any ape had ever seen before. A manifestation of culture, the opportunity of otherness.

This key scene of Kubrick's "2001: A Space odyssey" came to my mind when first banging into the sculptures of Walter Angerer-Niketa. The flesh-minded passer-by ready to consume art, is grinding to a halt and forced into contemplation. No way the consumer gets away so easily. The huge stone – Labrador stone, Thassos marble, granite – not providing any chance of delectation or recognition catches the eye. Premature judgement chokes, you have to make friends – with the violent power of quiescence in the sculptures of Pillhofer's disciple. One struggles for the right angle and realizes: less is impossible. The reduction of the sculptures is carried to extremes, to the limits of the bearable. Further reduction is impossible here. If less, it is no more. Angerer-Niketa is exploring the limits of art and it hurts. He takes off just that much of a cube that it irritates and changes perception. A sculpture emerges. The powerful stone is strangely floating. „By nature I am not prone to exuberance“, says the artist. Genuine understatement. The works are coherent and hermetic, they have reached their final point. Angerer-Niketa is looking for the perfect shape, the shortest expression of the message. To Angerer-Niketa the mimesis of organic forms through the medium stone – as done e. g. by Henry Moore – is incomprehensible, even an atrocity. “The medium is the message” (Marshall McLuhan). It would be absurd to force the hard stone into organic forms.

Preceded by long calculations Angerer-Niketa inflicts the most accurate surgery on the stone. Each angle and each inclination must correspond to the limit of the possible. The angular dimension on one side must perfectly correspond to the one on the other side. It's the reign of mathematically channelized emotion, not arbitrariness and coincidence. The sculptures are compositions of cool beauty similar to the fugues of Johann Sebastian Bach. “There was a time my work was born out of emotion”, ponders Angerer-Niketa. This may still be true, but Angerer-Niketa's logical corset is constantly refining. Emotion is sent off to its place and only allowed to appear as well-minded shape. The poetical aspect of the sculptor's stringent logic emerges when the spectator faces a minutely designed counterpart in the sculpture. “I want a sculpture which watches me and which I look at!” (Angerer-Niketa).

At age seven Angerer-Niketa was confined to bed for several years due to tuberculosis of the bones. He carved this silence into his soul and is giving it artistic expression, a stony evocation, throughout his life as a sculptor. Art never derives from a paradisiacal state, always and only from hardship. Nonetheless, as one will soon realize, the works are not repellent, but contemplative. The shape may be restrained and severe, but never repellent. The pharaoh sculpture bends backwards, lets the spectator get closer and does not cowardly avoid him. It opens up a dialogue to anyone interested – as do all the sculptures of Angerer-Niketa. You recognize art by its capacity to provide the spectator with the power to understand it (cf. Erhart Kästner). You'll find wistful traces of this understanding worked into the severe shapes of Angerer-Niketa's figures.

The fact that Angerer-Niketa is dealing with Egyptian gods and that he is finding them in reduced, matchlessly recognizable figures like Ptah, Osiris or Amun-Re is nothing but logical. Whoever has ever seen an Egyptian

pharaoh statue, faces the same quiescence inherent to Angerer-Niketa's sculptures. The pharaoh takes a step, seems to move, but his step is constructed in a way open to interpretation: Is it movement or standstill we see? It's the quiescence in movement and the movement in quiescence, an eerie snapshot of transition. The ancient Egyptian pharaoh's fist is always clenched – a characteristic intensifying the figure's rigidness and strength. In Angerer-Niketa's sculptures there are naturally (naturally?) no accentuated fists. He only quotes the pharaoh's external features. Daring. Grand.

„What I'll be aiming at, is an encounter with the super-father“, admits Angerer-Niketa and in fact, his figures send out high energy and something definitely sacral. The pictures and drawings completing Angerer-Niketa's oeuvre too show the same spirit of a sanctuary, the most sacred in Ancient Egypt – presented to the public only on festive days.

Especially for the present exhibition Walter Angerer-Niketa translated his stone sculptures into wood and re-constructed them in far smaller format. A gesture of reconciliation. Wood is warm and peaceful, the severe shape is softened by the material's warmth. “It was fun to create this nutwood set“, he says whimsically, “finally I'm ready to create sculptures for 'domestic use'“. Angerer-Niketa has never been this inviting before. He bends backwards like his pharaoh, doesn't yield but offers a dialogue. An invitation he was the first to accept: Walter Angerer-Niketa has arrived at himself.

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Yin Yang, 2006, 20x13x20 cm

Meditation, 2009, 20x20x13 cm

Würfel, 2009, 20x20x20 cm

Pharao, 2009, 17x12x40 cm

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