



Micro accumulations by the glow of a night light.

The work of Michael Part

Estheticism, Quality and the Beautiful are the entrails of Romanticism. In the hands of the over competent can result in Utopian renderings of pleasure driven signals that seem to catwalk through ones' perception without being padded down and challenged.

In the latest project space to open up by a co operative of artists at Praterstr.48 Wien, three images (photograms) by the Viennese artist Michael Part are projected on a wall. Directly across from each was a slide projector acrobatically perched at waist level atop fold-out skinny metal stools creating a gauntlet. At the opening the viewers became passers-by moving in front of the projectors in order to plot a course through the space and inadvertently cast figurative silhouettes over the abstract projections which were the only light source for the installation. This incidental blockage of light was the only resistance to the solicitation of empathy aroused not only by the strangely nostalgic feel of the imagery but also the ardent sense of economy and efficiency from which the show was comprised. I found myself searching for a way to implant a stop-gap to resist these saccharine laden illuminations.

A drinking glass with a small hole drilled in at the bottom, a pen-light, a cigarette lighter with another small LED light affixed to it and a night lamp. With this gear Michael sets out on the meticulous task of flash-burning light sensitive paper to re investigate form and expose details unrecognizable to the ordinary gaze. Information that was indiscernible without this internal investigative process is magnified and a moment of seeing what Michael says is the "Growing accumulation of dust"...that..."Tenderly changes the object", is distilled. A sculptor might take an onion or tree-stump or other matter and force it against a grinding wheel to uncover the many layers, rings or intricate patterns that give some indication to its structure and history. Mr. Part's tools of the trade are a bit less industrial but no less industrious and can be purchased at any near by Tabak shop.

Each image is undeniably pungent with an accelerated fate of fetishism. Defused forms coalesce with linear curves creating concaved portals that seem all too alluring if not for the dark abyss that is central in all three photograms. A calculated cryptic quality serves as a defense mechanism to deflect interpretation and is clearly engineered to sustain the fantasy obscure yet with an enormous sense of detailed illustration and anticipation of their "coming out". But unless one is privy to the origin of the source material, the artists' theories and the processes implemented, what is visually engrossing can get watered down to abstract obscurity relying on romanticism as the qualifier and denying the classical approach to get at the subject matter in order to arrive at content.

The images were assigned an individual scale that enabled them to be viewed separately as paintings. From a performative stand point, I read it as trap. Why three? Especially since that number in a formal setting has such symbolism attached. Just how long would it take for me to get that it's purely retinal before realizing it all was designed to smoke out my emotive impulses to import meaning or knock over one of the projectors in route to the bar? I was sheepishly self conscious about how I was navigating the space in order to view the images on the wall without seeing my own shadow. But I'm like that outside on the streets sometimes too. This mysterious allure came off as impractical because a reticent ambiguity made me feel as if I was loitering.

Clearly Michael is fastidious almost to a fault which makes me think that everything I see from him is purposeful down to the tiniest patch of, to use his wording again, "micro accumulations". I work with the guy as an art handler. He mixes he own special Moltofill (spackle) to a specific level of viscosity in order to fill a nail hole in a wall as one tentatively prepares plaster to pour into a mold; in Vienna we have time.

I left desperate for more clues I hope will be supplied in his next show. But somehow I doubt it. I think what we may have on our hands here is a younger warlock that has a wicked affinity for summoning up the mystical truths of the domicile; one who possesses a demure prowess to incite anticipation, anxiety and the yearning none the less for more exquisites of the banal.

Alexander Viscio

Michael Part: part@gmx.com