



MARION FINK

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Potsdam. Today's studio visit takes me to Marion Fink, an artist, who caught the attention not only of current top galleries in Germany, but also of international galleries. Her remarkable paintings will be shown in London and New York before the end of this year. I want to find out what makes these paintings so special.

Her studio – situated in a quiet street in a leafy part of Potsdam – is in a former Kindergarten that was transformed into a studio building. An austere stair case, an equally austere communal office in front of her studio, but then wow!

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As soon as I enter the room, I am completely bowled over. Broadsheets on the walls and the floor, or rather the almost life-size figures of the image motifs, are simply magic. A look at Marion Fink immediately reveals the similarity between her and the figures in her paintings. Totally different, however, is the mood. While the figures exude something rather introverted, indifferent, given over to loss, the artist is pure 'joie de vivre'. Smiling broadly, she tempts me to knock the first hole of the day into my diet, suggesting a cup of coffee and something sweet, and then starts chatting animatedly.

Marion: It is going really well at the moment. I had the great fortune to be able to make so many sales during my exhibitions in Hamburg and Basle that I am almost a little concerned not to have enough paintings for the imminent exhibitions in Frankfurt and Berlin [she tells me, exuberantly].

You don't hear that often. So there is no internal agonizing?

Marion: Fortunately not. Luckily, I am not afraid that I might run out of inspiration, or worry that I have already given my best. Ideas simply stream through me, I am completely centred! It was not always so. The decision to move from Berlin to Potsdam proved to be absolutely right for me. Not only that the neighbourhood is simply perfect for me – every morning I cycle through the Sanssouci Park to get here, wonderful – it was also the incredible opportunity I got with the solo exhibition in Kunstraum Potsdam c/o Waschhaus two years ago, which was the turning point for me.

You only had three months to fill a slot there and had an area of 300 square metres to play with. A formidable challenge.....

Marion: Yes indeed. At that time I was plagued by self-doubts and existential fear, as many people are after they have completed their studies. The confidence which this engagement gave me released incredible internal energies and also helped me to believe in myself.

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How does this fit in with the sceneries that you depict? There is something melancholic pervading them and moments of pausing and standing still. Coming from such a feeling of euphoria, what are the topics that lead you to such image motifs?

Marion: Irrespective of my mood, I always question our reality and life as such. What is reality? How do we construct it? What part does our consciousness play, and why am I flying on this gigantic rock through space? Our senses continuously tempt us to perceive reality differently from what it really is. I find this mix of physical and philosophical way of thinking extremely exciting.

However, instead of writing essays about my thoughts, I create paintings. In that way, I can by-pass the logical, prejudiced intellect and communicate directly on an emotional level.

Are they self-portraits?

Marion: Even if the female figures sometimes bear a slight similarity to me and individual body parts of mine are represented here and there – as, for example, here my feet and there my hand – they are really only representatives of people of my generation, and therefore not self-portraits.

I look at the paintings again. I become aware of the attributes in combination with the figures: Rocks, which, similar to a planetary system, form a scaffold, which appears to both constrict and protect a wan-looking young woman; an over-dimensional, wide open vice, on which a woman is carried through zero gravity, while she looks at the viewer in a defiant and self-assured manner; a snake-like shape, rising in a coil from the terrestrial globe, provides a woman wrapped around it with a hint of support; “future”, the writing in mirror image printed on the sleeve of her dress, emphasises the unstableness of the scene.

I am also becoming aware of the use of collage and, simultaneously, the unusual colour structure of the individual fragments in the composition of the picture. Overall, they convey the impression of a digitally produced printed graphic work. “This is oil on paper”, I ask, confused, “not a print”?

Marion: Yes. They are so-called monotypes. Originally a technique that was developed in the 17th century for small sketch formats. Although the impression of a printed graphic work is created, it is not replicable and thus an original. I have been working on the development of the process for myself since 2016.

And how does this work?

Marion: I start by drawing the motif in mirror image on a sketch pad. I then place a Perspex film on this sketch, to which I apply oil paint. Finally, I press the wet painting, using body strength, on to the final image carrier. However, my monotypes are not made in a single print. I use many steps of painting and printing to assemble the image motif, puzzle-like, on paper, almost like a collage. What I find particularly fascinating are the unpredictable structures of the colours shining through, which emerge during the process.

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The titles of your paintings and the typographical elements integrated in your works seem to be chosen deliberately. Are they meant to be explanations of the paintings?

Marion: No. I use the titles to try and express my thoughts in a poetic way, thus adding another dimension to the paintings. Apart from art I am also very partial to literature. I always enjoyed reading and writing. Originally, I wanted to become a journalist.

So, when did you discover art as a profession for yourself?

Marion: That was a convoluted process. I come from a small town in Allgäu. Art, particularly contemporary art, did not really exist there. Although I was crazy about drawing to express my feelings, particularly in my teens, it was more like writing a diary. You won't believe this, but it was a professional aptitude test that led me to think that I might have artistic talent. The test result was: Artist, journalist or DJ [she laughs]. My father, who paid for the test, was not particularly amused about it, as one can understand.

Because I really enjoy creative writing, I first tried to study communication science at Freie Universität Berlin, working for newspapers at the same time. However, the bone-dry theory and the news journalism did absolutely nothing for me. Berlin and meeting various people during that time helped to open my eyes to contemporary art. At that time, the thought emerged that working as an artist would be my only true vocation. I followed this impulse and eventually studied arts at Gorlesborg School of Fine Art in Stockholm and then at Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Hamburg, where I completed my studies in 2016. During this entire period I was on an emotional roller coaster. Particularly the move from the idyllic world of Stockholm to Hamburg, where I shared a flat with two very wild women on the Reeperbahn of all places, was just unreal!

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Looking back, I wonder – self portraits, after all? The figures in her paintings reflect her experiences and how she comes to grips with herself. Or is it more: Do these figures and the attributes surrounding them not perhaps symbolise the typical identity forming issues of her generation? A generation permanently confronted with a globalised world that changes at a furious pace or – to use Marion Fink’s words – which keeps questioning its relationship to its own world and constructs new realities.

All in all perhaps a philosophical look behind the Beautiful-World-Scenery of a generation that only seems to have no cares?

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