

Open Source (Graphic Objects and Object Graphics)

Graphic artist Mike Wegerer is a craftsman who excellently knows his stuff. He is a researcher who fathoms artistic material and its enhancement. His strategy is to irritate and involve the observer while one of the main topics is the relation between text and image as well as the (conditions of) perception of boundaries between reality and play.

In one key-piece of his recent exhibition, "open source", a stepladder invites to take an elevated seat. But one would barely reach the tread— let alone the fact that it would be capable of carrying one's body weight since it is made of paper.

It is beyond dispute that the objects shown at Kunstraum Arcade in Mödling are to be seen as works of art for the context is defined. At first glance, the ladder seems to be left over from assembling the exhibition. Is the room still under construction, or is the exhibition finalised?

However, the objects are not as randomly arranged as if they would simulate a studio-setting. The ladder resembles the conventional object of utility, in fact, it just reminds of it.

The lacking of steps, (as) a symptom of non-customariness, refers to the domain of the artificial, its "non-sense" turns the object into a piece of art. In our culture, a piece of art is considered as something sublime, elevated from the level of material reality to the realms of spiritual: a claim stressed by the title, "Obelisk".

In ancient times in its country of origin, an obelisk liased earth with the divine, and in modern times it became a symbol of fame.

But the functionality of this ladder here is of no major importance—the details are essential! Marks, imprints by the model's surface, scratches to be seen on the tread in back light, these are haptic qualities referring to the process of production. This piece renders homage to handcraft. Little proofs of imperfection foil the claim implicit in the title.

The traditionally two-dimensional category of graphic art whose expression "graphiké" stems from the ancient Greek technique of drawing and writing is extended to the three-dimensional.

A three-dimensional ordinary object is the model for a two-dimensional imprint which is then transformed into a three-dimensional piece of art.

Art is able to open real and imaginary spaces. A second dominating object in the exhibition room works as a symbol for that: A door which actually is not a door. The object results from multiple steps. Mike made a woodcut from a real wooden door which is traceable

by the grain leaving marks on the paper. Then, in October 2007, he invited the participants of the international symposium "Baghdad in Love" at WUK, Vienna, to spontaneously express their thoughts and feelings and leave drawings or handwritten comments on the door's surface. A lot of remarks reflect upon war but you can also find an Iraqi love poem showing the patriotism of one of the (Iraqi?) participants.

It is also the observer who creates the image. Here, the famous proverb by Marcel Duchamp is to be taken literally. The limits between creation and perception become permeable, and the observer not only perceives but participates, while the author hands over control about his work to the observer.

But there was a further transformation, this time by the artist himself, for the result of the symposium became a printing plate! The mirror-inverted printed copy of the handwritten credentials inverts the oriental writing order (regularly from the right to the left) to be read in the "western" manner, and vice versa. By doing so, this door casually also becomes a symbol for cultural relativity. Baghdad is deemed to be (near) the ancient city of "Babylon" or "Babel", the place where the biblical confusion of tongues is assumed to have taken place.

The artist's strategy of involving the observer is also recognizable in the works called "Fenster-Dialog" shown in the Arcade's office room. They emerged from the exhibition "Sommerdialog" at Museumsquartier in Vienna last year. Predominantly Turkish, Austrian, Chinese and German artists retained their sentiments by using a black felt marker on the cling foil the window glass was covered with. Wegerer exposed the findings and so produced serigraphies on the real window glass.

Resembling a/ Reminding of a table, the paper sculpture "artist's choice" is put under perspex/ acrylic glass like the latest graphic art works titled "multiple places" which are shown at the end wall of the exhibition room.

For the latter, the abreast use of German and English expressions represents another, a more personal Babylon: It is based on confusions through misunderstandings during the artist's stay in Dublin.

Mike Wegerer invites us to get involved in dialogues: The dialogue between the objects among themselves, and the dialogue between the artwork and oneself as the observer.

(Heike Rosenbaum, Vienna. June 2009)