

The wolf on the wall

Jackal, wolf, hyena? In any case it is a vigilant doganimal, that is sitting there at the Rittergasse/St. Alban Graben, with its pricked ears and watchful eyes. This naturally shy creature on the tapistry at the facade has not come to town on its own accord. Where is civilisation no more wilderness can be found and where you find wilderness civilisation has not arrived yet. Jackal, wolf and hyena are as inappropriate in a city, like human beings in the rain forest. There might be a globe but there are at least two strategies of life on it and they are absolutely incompatible and contrary to one another. Without manipulation, tricks and magic there would not even be any points of contact let alone cross overs between them. Art as well is such a word for manipulation, tricks and magic. For a few years the young spanish artist, Darya von Berner has now been manipulating, tricking and performing magic in order to create points of contact and cross overs between things that are alien to one another.

Onto half geometric blocks, onto big cloths or in the style of a fresco she paints undomesticated animals large or small ones onto inside and outside walls.

Elephants, rhinoceruses, pesces and wolves again and again. In the gallery Triebold she also lets one of those monumental animals from the family of the Canes creep up on the red primed wall. Painting she avoids a definition. All her animals are painted "par le milieu", meaning not from the contour. Contour is what distinguishes one thing from the others, it is what seperates and cuts things out from the world. Contour is the borderline that leaves things stand alone. Passages on the other hand, from one thing to the other are open and fluent if they have not been blocked by civilisation and culture. The contourless painting of Darya von Berner has a nature closer to quoting or summonin: It is as if they have appeared like the objects of an exposed film once it has been developed or as if they only actually came into existence in the process of seeing itself. A certain distance is needed to be able to tell the figures from the pictoral organism of light and shadow. Who gets to close to the menagerie will get lost in the details and contrasts. Just exactly this indispensable distance is, what makes us aware of the problematic closeness, that the artist is dealing with. It would be misleading to understand these original pictorial engagement of those unmistakable icons as mere appeals. The motif does not come from a WWF affinity ("Safe the wild animals!"), the concerns have more complex and disquieting origins. They are not dealing with the reconciliation of the antagonistic, much more they are actually highlighting the irreconcilable. The technical appliances that the arists utilizes to equipe her image installations- flashing light bulbs or small TV's- want to emphasize that there is something that does not belong to one another and can never belong. It is the old gesture of cave painting, that the work of Darya von Berner assures itself with. The wolf at the gallery wall, bares resemblance to the Bison at the roof of rocks: they are related pictoral evocations of wonder, longing, pride and guilt.

For the occasion of the solo show at Galerie Triebold-Basel
Hans Joachim Müller, Basel 1993