

*Good pictures drop anchor near the inexpressible*

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Two constant features have developed in Hadassah Emmerich's art over the years: they are linked but follow different conceptual considerations. One dimension expands outwards, into the space, even accessing urban space; the other is a tentative, internalised, intimate kind of artistic research and self-research.

Let us consider the internalised view.

Everything which Hadassah Emmerich begins is full of enthusiasm. Standing in front of her pictures, the viewer has the feeling that what she is doing is very urgent and significant. Yet her lines are light and at the same time precise. In this way, the great moments arise in the small details, amazing the viewer.

A lot is happening in her pictures. Their jungle-like aesthetic is magical. These pictures are of such formal density and complexity that they charm the eyes and also provide a mass of material to prompt the viewer to ponder about riddles, gaps and turning points.

Just because her pictures are so pleasant and rounded to read, it is impossible to interpret or describe a sequence of events in them. There are no linear strands in her pictures; instead, several energy currents flow permanently, circling round and feeding each other. The artist has gained a huge freedom between composition and improvisation. Nothing in these pictures is strident or genre-typical; each turn follows the previous moment. Everything in these pictures is organic. On the other hand, no accent seems unconsidered; there are no flowery touches in the painting to obscure the purity of the idea.

Hadassah Emmerich sets out her painterly position lightly. Rather than making statements, she reacts sensitively to every structure already laid out, full of respect for the form and at the same time open to the impulses which arise through the impressions of happiness ringing together in the Somewhere. But then she slackens the reins and adds sugar to her emotions until they bubble up, become energetic, dense and loud: all within a linked dynamic, like a multi-dimensional fabric of action and reaction which cannot be unravelled.

In artistic terms, Hadassah Emmerich is playing a multiple-refraction game here with the objects and associations within her focus. Threads are spun in her paintings, wall paintings, drawings and collages, which link the individual works into a kind of suite. Their linguistic imprint is essentially determined by the use of materials. In her works on paper in particular, some of which are large-scale, she attains an unusually high level through her sensitive melding of the materials ink, charcoal, oil pastel, pastel and wax crayon, always expressing that trace of Utopia which is innate to improvisation. At times, the artist integrates linocuts into her works. Lines of text, both her own expressions and quotations, are also included.

There is nothing new about saying that Hadassah Emmerich engages with popular exoticism and the exotic. In the past, she has critically examined colonial history and European concepts of foreignness in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example in the "Konstruktionen des Anderen" [Constructions of the Other] (1) and the focus on the "savage" as an inadequate otherness. Yet Hadassah Emmerich's work is not a dry educational journey for the eyes. In her pictures, she creates sensuously vibrating spaces for thought – and this makes her recent works unique and creates a long-term impression. The sub-text is never intrusive. Every mood, every colour value and every change of tempo is precisely balanced. She pulls out the stops confidently, but always alertly – and is therefore focused above all on

the overall effect, not issues of interpretation. She considers those to be of secondary importance. Her current work shows a new stringency in the way she assembles quotations and historical cross-references into an inspiring form of contemporary art. The way she brings the archaic into contact with modern feedback and creates the visual space which the aesthetic bridges need in order to develop their effects is also new. It is a new twist. Hadassah Emmerich's works are no longer simply her pictorial register for questions of origin and identity. Alongside the archaeology of discourse, she describes in her current works research journeys in the sphere of the imagination, entirely focussed on painterly aspects and the artist's internal points of emphasis. Dominance, rushing ahead, are alien to her, even in the site-specific wall-filling wall paintings. Rather, she treats each detail with care. She listens to her pictures and experiments with their sound. Each element is significant and has its own character. The main focus is on like-mindedness, not the decorative effect. Viewers working their way through her compositions, which are also designs for the world, might find their gaze getting caught on details – a concentration of the surface here, a graphic scraping there. The important thing is the atmospheres, the weighting of the design options and the adventure of uncertainty in the endless range of possibilities.

A risk, a draft, the leaving of tracks – that should make us pause in the face of reality, which of course can also be the reality of painting or graphic work. It is about gaining an alternative measure of the useful, one which can be found between the lines and which makes us aware of its urgent interest in the present in a different way than through a political statement.

Hadassah Emmerich is a clever, reflective artist, but she doesn't babble. Good pictures drop anchor near the inexpressible. We see Emmerich's paintings breathe and see how new things bud, burst open, branch out on their surface – as unforeseeable forms. That is the fascination of this art of coalescence.

It is impressive to see how she succeeds in stripping off all external tension, casting the spotlight all the more incisively on the picture's internal tension.

Beneath a layer of boisterous collage and de-collage phenomena, Hadassah Emmerich unfolds her constructive dream, her perspective on a transparent Otherness without representation, which after all does not need any know-it-all political representation; freed in transitional steps, it makes its way on the basis of equality and general acceptance. Perhaps this transformational world has not yet been completely realised and perhaps it will never exist, but Hadassah Emmerich, who has Dutch-Indonesian, German and Chinese roots, presents us with its poetic invention as if the tide had already turned.

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References:

(1)

Volker Gottowik: Konstruktionen des Anderen. Clifford Geertz und die Krise der ethnographischen Repräsentation, Dietrich Reimer Verlag, Berlin 1997, p. 136 ff.