

The Image of Man

In our modern time of fast glances, where pictures are breathing down one another's necks only to be quoted by the next ones, and where the origin of everything is just a muddle, where the becoming marks the end as well as the end's denoting everything and nothing at the same time, when no image is sufficient unto itself, but has to become a perpetuum mobile fragile, one painter, Harald Kohlmetz, has the pluck to tackle the unfathomable, the image of man.

Here, there is nothing to divert us from the essential. A lifesize painting figure hovering statuelike in nothingness confronts us standing fast on groundless ground.

The corrupt and hasty glance is fingering the oblong for reliable structures to suggest support. But there is nothing except a picture of man, at once banal and of terrifying impact.

Our glance gets caught in his eyes, tries to take his measurements, wanders across his face, the arms and hands and down to the shod feet, then back over the body, clad simply in trousers and a white shirt, then on again to the head and the eyes, still feeling a stranger and lacking support.

Our eye wanders on. Our glance explores face, failing while it wishes to capture the eye, then tries to understand the thick layers of paint, wants a definition of the eyes, the nose, and the mouth – they are anatomically correct, but elusive – , it hurries through the picture in search of relief, becomes quicker in its movements up and down and across, being chased and seeking shelter on the familiar wall that surrounds the painting space – oh, give it up.

And back again. Our glance does not want to surrender, it finds and the same doesn't, remains seeing an unseeing. These are the eye-moments of seeing and being seen. Who are you, human being? Who am I? We see the image of man, a thousand glances, sufficient unto themselves, self-sufficient, self-reliant, unfathomable. Classic.

H. N. Semjon, Berlin, July 1996

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