

Katja Flint – Eins/One

Exhibition at Semjon Contemporary from March 30th to May 4th, 2019

The Moment of Being (One) – Internal and External Reality

Der Moment des (S)eins – Innere und äußere Wirklichkeit

These times of great uncertainty – when suddenly entire patterns of behavior and thinking and social, political and economical agreements, forged over decades of long struggle, are crushed and collapse – these are also the times of introspection and the beginning of a new creative turn. All catastrophes carry – as terrible as it might sound and also be – the birth of the new. One must only be able to sense it and develop the tools to see it. A critical mind is the prime prerequisite of creation. The according susceptibility for measuring these moods and vibes and turning them into new energy is common to all creative individuals, no matter in which discipline they are active in.

In such times hatred, anger and brutish, animalistic tendencies in us humans break free bluntly, encouraged and feeling comfortable in the great wave of like-minded people, forcing those who are undecided and insecure to leave their comfort zones, letting themselves be swept away into the new, big, alleged whole. Taboos as a set of rules for living together in a civilized manner, which is a great achievement of various societies that have went through many painful catastrophes, have become brittle.

These tendencies threaten to break Europe apart. The old order of the world begins to falter; some old men play poker for supremacy, openly making use of people to serve their ruthless interests as if they were exchangeable resources. Nature, as part of God's creation, is about to collapse irrevocably. The conflict between the north and the south, predicted already decades ago, has obviously entered our formerly 'perfect world'. Fear is in the air.

When Katja Flint in her photographical portraits brings out the entire spectrum of emotional states, working on these together with her model, she is concerned with mirroring the internal disparity of our emotions within ourselves and a general sense of inconsistency in the world. It is Katja Flint's concern to elicit in her models a moment of soon emerging, overwhelming emotions, unknown at the beginning of the session, and an intimate affair in the process of working with her model. The artist, who in her other creative profession is a master of representing any kind of strong but also delicate and hardly noticeable emotions, can due to this experience – acquired in the form of acting techniques during her studies and refined constantly in the daily theatre life and new cinematic challenges but also thanks to her talent of empathetic intelligence – show solidarity with her model and gently direct him or her, now as visual director, according to her wishes.

Katja Flint begins the sessions in her studio with trying to trigger, certainly after many conversations, sentiments such as aggression and anger, with the protagonist coming more and more out of his/her shell, almost like an act of liberation, just to progress toward soft,

sensitive and more differentiated, subtle emotional spheres. Katja Flint is, however, not interested in a precise reproduction of an emotional state of mind. What appeals to her is rather depicting the very essence of the respective emotion. The model, as it were, becomes carrier of one or several affections that extend beyond the model's current immanent physical and psychological condition. Getting to the essence of emotion can be accomplished best through de-personalizing the model by the use of blur as an important creative feature. It 'protects' the photographed person against the effects of an expositional verism. This blur is created by capturing movement through the means of long time exposure. This effect is created mainly through the movement of the head in the picture – most part of the statuesque torso is fixed and it functions therefore as 'carrier' of the (emotional) action in focus. The pitch-black abstract surroundings, which could equally be designated as stage (stage area), intensify or dramatize the depicted action, at the same time distancing the model from subject to object. The long time exposure, which delineates the movement of the head, does not create scurried shadows; rather a ghost of light by means of careful illumination, which traces the anatomy of the head sometimes more and sometimes less precisely, yet catching which is most essential and real to the artist, for example the cry of pain or fury in Toni and Lisa, with their mouths wide open and white snarling teeth, almost like in an X-ray image, cleverly lighted, becoming scary and overwhelming in its vehemence; or Wulf Oscar mutated into a wild wolf with a white motion shadow on the right side of the head which even enhances its 'beastly' quality, particularly with its slightly ellipsoid-contorted pupils flickering at us incredibly aggressively. However, there are also friendly emotions: circular movements of the head make Joker almost turn into an affectionate and cheerful grotesque, formulating an almost innocent smile with its wide open mouth, which makes the expression appear quite friendly and at peace with himself. In Rockstar K. the model is transformed (with Katja Flint acting simultaneously as model and visual director) to an androgynous creature, looking inside curiously, confidently, pertly and diabolically transfigured, yet at the same time gazing at the viewer without disclosing anything to its counterpart: the eyes turn into a peculiar band of shadows, whereas the correct 'gazing anatomy' is not questioned.

Almost all of her photographs are in landscape format. This is unusual for portrait photographs, which are normally presented in portrait size (in contrast to the term landscape size for horizontal formats). The depiction of a person, mostly focusing on the head as carrier of the personality's essentials, is, due to its function, restricted to the upright format – as the anatomy of the head rather demands vertical than horizontal alignment. Why? The reason is mainly technical, but also grounded in the Katja Flint's artistic intention: she tries to display emotions through movement in a single picture (in contrast to a movie, which is a series of pictures!). This can only be accomplished in a predefined (visual) space, which can either evolve upwards or downwards (portrait format) or to the sides (landscape format). The processual character of an emotional development is defined by time. Time, however, is traditionally perceived as horizontal, as a sequence of individual images. Facial expressions, in contrast, change within fractions of a second. Ad-hoc reactions at the click of

a button are not possible, since facial expressions are part of a complex system of facial muscles, skin tension and changes in pupil size. Through the means of long time exposure the artist can either trace the face, the physique of which is changing, with her camera (like with a movie camera) or capture the motion sequence of the protagonist's face while keeping the camera static. Probably, both practices are more or less equal and can be regarded, among other things, as an expression of the photographer's close collaboration with the model, granting it a large degree of autonomy and at the same time formally shaping the image that is to be created. So, she is visual director, documentarist and creator in one person. The procedural factor when creating a single picture also illustrates the transformation aspect from subject to object. The artist is concerned with the representation of emotions or different spiritual states, with her model functioning as carrier and the visually impressive black darkness exposing veristically the luminescent parts of the emotion.

Katja Flint's solo-exhibition *One* presented at Semjon Contemporary is a reduced adaptation of an exhibition of the same title shown previously in the Kunsthalle Rostock. However, her works will be presented here in a way other than in Rostock, given the spatial setting of the gallery and its size. Due to the manner of presentation *One* will feature rather as a cabinet exhibition, among others through the difference of the gallery's small rooms, but also through the compositional assemblage of several photographs to clusters, resulting in exciting dialogues. Particularly significant here will be pictures that can be described as strongly dialogue-oriented: *Mother and Daughter* is such an example.

The strength of Katja Flint's photographs from the series *One* lies in the fact that she opposes traditional classical patterns of portrait photography and develops an own visual vocabulary, which invites the viewer to join her associative approach without providing a predefined narrative. At the same time, she goes beyond the individual in portrait photography, creating an atmosphere of distanced instantaneousness, which de-individualizes the protagonists in focus and turns subjects into objects in order to portray the integral parts of one or more emotional states. The viewer can discover him- or herself in the picture, or even get lost in it.

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