



What Does the Future look like? Part II

Anne Imhof:
Natures Mortes, 2021
Exhibition with
performances at the
Palais de Tokyo, Paris

Today we aren't writing about brilliant colors, bling and happiness. Nor about whether the art world will become democratic over the course of the decade. Whether the art market, the site for seekers of quality — which is driven by sales, as all markets are — will become truly diverse. Whether more and more cultures will participate. For *Ikea* and *Zara* — meaning entrepreneurial strategies for re-designing aesthetic inventions for an audience of millions — are not the art market's central focus. A *Lumas* Gallery is sufficient for such needs. Real collectors don't want lacquered frames with signed reproductions. Instead, they watch the market. They dally, they sample, and they listen. They don't confine themselves to one path, they follow several personalities and directions to find out if one of those directions or a bundle of directional signals is going to be exciting. Only then are artists or galleries courted financially, only then are purchases made out of conviction. Mistakes cannot be excluded! **But which trends are showing up beyond the apparent democracy evoked by the many curated sales? In view of the "CryptoPunks," it would be better to buy a company that produces NFTs instead of a single, overpriced work.** In the case of Pablo Picasso and Andy Warhol, it is better as well to postpone acquisitions, for the ceilings of appreciation have been reached here. The same has long been true of Francis Bacon, Gerhard Richter, Cy Twombly and even of younger artists like Mark Bradford, Adrian Ghenie or Julie Mehretu. These are wonderful artists, but they are already very expensive or, let's say, too expensive. So what should one do? **Anne Imhof says, "I want to make images that are enclosed but frameless just like Kafka's spaces." The sought-for solution does not exist.** We are experiencing what is possibly the greatest cultural re-evaluation since the beginning of the Enlightenment. It's not just a matter of economic battles between China and the USA, the economically uncertain role of Europe or Africa's opportunities for advancement, all of which has an impact on culture. The upheaval has to do with the Anthropocene, with the idea and the false belief in the superiority of races, religions and patents. The Anthropocene of seemingly limitless actions by individual human agents is a thing of the past. The future of art manifests itself today in the search for a changed coexistence: with other cultures, peoples, nations. However, coexistence does not manifest itself as an ideal world. We are far from having a good relationship with plants and animals, or from finding a balance between fragility and stability, much as we talk and think about these themes. When we look for images of this state of affairs, we see almost nothing but kitsch. **The learning curve is steep. Almost nothing is written in a book. The very good artists are also seeking, except that their search is different and more concentrated than ours.**

When Anne Imhof speaks of spaces, as she did in her exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, she is thinking of “movement that does not necessarily have a cause. Movement without a cause and without arrival.” In her art, we are like dogs on leashes, constantly on the move, except that, curiously, the dogs have no master. Unanimity is also a thing of the past. We loved it dearly. It was there as security, because for a long time, art reached us under the hegemony of the United States. Almost all western cultures after 1945, from Los Angeles to Tokyo, developed unanimously in this sense. There was a belief in dependable values: Jackson Pollock, Barnett Newman, Donald Judd, Pop Art, and ideally no more than three or four particularly large galleries that could induce the majority of museums to make more or less the same acquisitions and exhibitions. Around a hundred years earlier, the Musée du Louvre and the idea of World Art pioneered this path. A path that was not simply based on curiosity but initially, owing to Napoleon, on conquest and plunder, i.e. on power. **Now our world is becoming strangely polyphonic. In many places and in many ears one can almost speak of cacophony. The machines that keep us running seem once again to be obscure, reminiscent of Franz Kafka.** They are threatening to go out of sync more often, be it due to arbitrarily imposed tariffs, due to the pandemic, or due to interrupted supply chains. At the same time, and more than ever, we are looking at divided societies. In many nations we are observing divisions that hold the risk of civil war or dictatorship. Switzerland has experience in this respect because it has established a democratic consensus between cantons that are at odds with each other. In art, that is not sufficient at the moment. Here, an awakening has taken place, because the “one” thing no longer exists. Who will teach us what we want to protect, what is truly dear to us, what has real significance? **“For an instant,” Imhof says, “capitalism seemed fragile. But it’s like a cockroach, you try to kill one, it just spreads eggs.”** In the art of the future, what will count more and more will be the relationship between the actors, the interdisciplinary element, the establishment of model cocoons, of communities in which people may feel like slaves, cooking and singing and loving in the absence of a perfect world. Maybe the next *documenta* will create a miracle. As early as 2003, the words “Less Oil More Courage” appeared on a painting by the Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanijia. We are still far from attaining that ideal.

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