

Paintings as Mystic Echo Chambers

The components of his paintings are: on the one hand buildings made of concrete – elegantly designed, naked, and cold, and on the other hand the forest – destroyed by forces that remain unclear. A dismal mood passes and is replaced by a dangerous one.

For more than 70 years, the square concrete boxes of modernism have been the set for the dreams and dramas of wealth and power, of the climbers from the middle classes, seen a thousand times in the cinema. But that progress, vision, and innovation can also have their negative sides as dark bastions and alien bodies in nature we can also see as aesthetic proof of the plight of modernism. But are we in the past? What do these paintings want to tell us? Like spaceships made of reinforced concrete, Jens Hausmann's sleek bunkers seem to anchor. No faces, no gestures, sometimes a few empty garden chairs at the edge of a pool, or two assisting figures in a fathomless aquarium that might as well be the sea. Hausmann paints with a gesture of dark pronouncement a plane which attacks the soul and mind with confounding energy and which reveals plenty of beauty to those few who don't think it is varnished alligator skin. Does Jens Hausmann paint from memory, or does he look to the future? His paintings have a melancholy element that creates a mystic echo chamber, marked by the beautiful allure of the unfamiliar and the expanse of space and time.

Nonetheless, the hierarchy of the familiar and unfamiliar has disappeared. Our political eye knows how to classify camp towers and barracks architecture, even without a live ticker and live videos.

Jens Hausmann's current series of paintings is an extreme, indeed mannerist *exercice de style* with a strong jolting effect. *Abendland* (2010), certainly a central work in his oeuvre, has undergone repeated compositional changes, and is in its current version stylistically consistent. The secret of *Abendland* lies in the meticulous painting of the setting and the ambivalence between an illustration of a dream (or nightmare) and current critique. In its semi-documentary habitus, the painting can be localized in the highly active zone between both worlds.

None of his paintings are free of bitter elements. However, anything demonstratively political is left out. Hausmann reflects the successes and non-successes of modernism and modernistic architecture through colour and the overlapping of figurative and non-figurative elements. With every pore of the canvas, the mysterious quality and the narrative voids of his paintings underline the failure of utopias. Formal and above all plane positings are made with and through colour to dynamise the representative and subjective spectrum of tensions.

Quite consciously, Jens Hausmann leads the beholder up the garden path. He or she can decide whether to continue on the path into the romantic fairytale, with all the pathos that his theme seems to demand, or whether they want to keep

some distance to compulsive right angles so propagated by the gurus of modern architecture and above all by the sorry socialist number crunchers. Their designs are monuments of an idea that should not be measured against reality, and which Jens Hausmann reveals as a dogma that is not willing to accommodate (human) nature and the natural. Sometimes we get the impression that Hausmann is directly opposed to the pseudo-revolutionary idea of a 'residential cell', and then again we get the impression of devoted stylistic exercises in angular simplicity. Just as Hausmann makes glass and concrete visible, indeed almost tactile, as he is faithful to the nature of the materials, he never seems inhibited, rather he knows how to convert the adherence to the material into the impression of something appealing and alluring. Those who do not wish to follow the multiplications of architectural forms in paintings like *Diktatur 1*, *Modern House 12* or the smaller interior views *Fragment 4 / Fluchtweg* and *Fragment 5 / Vorhalle* (all 2011), will make these motifs look like late fruits of the conservative modernism for which, purged to sparseness, the term brutalism does not seem inappropriate. Hausmann doesn't seek too distancing a tone. Nonetheless, he ensures attention through alertness and consistency. His speciality is the formation of contrasts. He always makes clear that next to simplicity, there is the jungle, indeed chaos, 'the saturnalia of being', 'creative nature'. Next to the accommodating and homely, he (a classic Romantic) sees the uncanny, the 'Dionysian' whereof Nietzsche speaks, the *urbeing*, the finally not graspable Being that encompasses everything. Here, in the *Wald-Stücke*, the German forest gapes, adorned with moss, stone, and fern, tousled by rolled lumber. The colour creations shimmer from afar, as if in the last sunlight. Experiences with nature with a clean conscience look different. Unimpressed by this, Jens Hausmann mixes enchanting sweetness, withered sallowness, and glaring piquancy. All this his brush can do. He is an interpreter who likes to speak in many voices. Maybe this is where the roots of the contrast between technical modernism and anachronistic self-image lie? At least, inside the forest Hausmann's sense for stumbling in beauty is hidden, as well as his aversion to razzmatazz. There is a moment when the lifecycle closes in truth and you stand once again where you started. Because in recent years, we also had to experience that progress is also a chain of incessant crises caused by disastrous events that befall us.

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