



Link März 2014

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1. On the background of your design studies – nothing is more alike and yet more contrastive than design and arts. Where do you draw the dividing line?

There is actually no need to draw a line here. For centuries, there was only craftwork as a category for designing. Arts and design then were the same. Nowadays, if you label and exhibit design products as art, design is turned into arts. And if you sell art at the supermarket, art can turn into design as well. I do not want to detach my own art from good design; it is today's approach in graphic design that disturbs me. Everything is digitalized here and decisions are only taken through the eye looking at the monitor. The observer should be able to smell and feel my images. That's why I work with elements like cardboard, foil, plastics and other remnants. The surface of these “analog” finds have a formative influence on the design and planning of my canvas.

2. Are you an artist, or do you make arts?

For myself, I could not imagine making art without being an artist. Otherwise I would feel like a forger of art, even if their meticulous magic tricks have just been honoured by the documentary *“Beltracchi: The Art of Forgery”*. Beltracchi and his colleagues actually succeed in merely producing and selling art without feeling any real connection with their works. However hard I tried, I could never create such distance between my images and myself. Each work of art is based on positions which then have to be defended by the artist.

3. Exhibiting your works and presenting them to the public is a big step. Your first exhibition – what did it feel like?

Well, that was a long time ago now. My first exhibition was at a little crafts market at the *Nassenhof* in Monschau-Mützenich – as a twelve-year-old boy. I felt great, even if it did not feel as glamorous as I had expected. With my paintings, I found myself wedged between batik-work shawls and the regional straw souvenirs of the Eifel. But it was a sunny day in spring and I had even sold one picture.

4. The single images of “Kompatibilitätsmodus” can be combined and are thus expandable. You thus offer some piece of your artwork to the observer and let them make up their own interpretation. How did you get that idea?

In figurative paintings, the observer quickly makes up his own interpretation. To avoid a narrow interpretation, you can simply use abstract illustrations. In abstract paintings, I can put the observer in the position of seeing all or nothing. In my combinable images, with discernible and cartoonish, simply structured figures, I wanted to achieve a similar effect without leaving the representational level. Through new combinations, you come up with new interpretations of different kind. While I was working on this series, I found that it was a time-consuming process to create all the canvasses in such a way that they could finally be put together and re-combined in arrays of up to 12 metres length. You actually have to be painting all the images simultaneously to keep them in harmony. That's how the project's name – “Um Kopf und Kragen” – came to my mind.

#### 5. The interpretations of other people – curse or blessing?

To me, interpretations are more of a blessing. In the atelier, you are usually rather isolated, alone with your thoughts and imagination. So I do like hearing completely new ideas about my images. Which does not mean that other opinions about my art have any influence on my work afterwards. As an artist, I am obviously as “immune” to suggestions as possible.

#### 6. In some of your works, there is the recurring element of the red tape. A leitmotif? A symbol? What does it mean?

That's right, the red tape occurs several times. My new works are no longer combinable and stand for themselves, but if you say that the red tape seems to be a leitmotif, I think that's an adequate symbol. I do not consider sticky tape, bubble wrap and plastic bags to be material of artistic value. But that's exactly why I like adding them to my images as disturbing factors.

7. What question would you have asked yourself at the beginning of an interview?

I would have asked whether I think that giving interviews might increase my value on the artists' market...well, I suppose I hope it will ;)