

## Sultan Acar Painting

A young woman is shown from the side. The head is turned. Abundant black, stylized tight looking hair obscures her face. Only the chin area is free. Slender straps of a dress are tied around the neck. Bare shoulders and arms, neck and chin are modeled in delicate chiaroscuro and located in the image's diagonal convey gentle momentum and youthful vitality. Attitude and appearance of the woman represent grace and attractiveness. The hair is mounted to an elaborate knot. In the shine of light glossy parts of the headdress run on a black clasp. The hair forms into a self-contained three-dimensional decor. Although or perhaps because the portrayed subduces from the view of the observer, thus preventing eye contact and identification, she draws the attention onto her. In this early portrait Sultan Acar removes all individual features. At the same time she detains the woman from space and time. The background of the figure is a monochrome grayish-brownish surface. By hiding the outer identification features and by fading out the context the perception is redirected. The viewer's eye is free for the hair nod and the dress holder. The gaze of the observer is forwarded to the traces which could contain information about the portrayed.

The more the reduction, the stronger the impulse to search. Which attributes reveal something about the figure, a possible event or even a story? Does the young woman look at somebody? What is her relation to him? What is the expression on her face? At this moment the observer can start or continue a depiction or a narrative or project his own story onto the painting. The depth of the painting and the plasticity of the figure, the concrete context of the moment are replaced by an open mental space.

Despite the omissions and flaws the image still works as a portrait, a portrait that leaves the creation of its consistency and rigor to the creativity and the construction needs of the viewer. The reception mirrors the production. In her compositions Sultan Acar shows perception and painting as interplay of reality, translation of reality and artistic practice which follows its own dynamics. Anatomy, shape and structure take the place of the depiction of a person. The image asserts itself to its contents, and yet the images function as portraits.

Often bigger than life-size, following the real template and at the same leaving it behind, the in Bremen born, Turkish painter Sultan Acar works on women's images. The views from the side or from the back have already become a hallmark of the still young career of the artist.

Already the early works convey an idea of the basic subject. The correlation of concreteness and abstraction develop into a complex, multifaceted dialogue, which continues to set free new surprises and results. Not the linear development from representation to abstraction of the dogmatic modernism is the subject, but the correspondence between the seen and the made and its many steps and paces. Alongside with her effigies the artist researches and works as well in landscapes and ornamental compositions.

In a more recent version of the above-described image, the hair became an ornamental texture. Comparable to a textile it follows the contours of the headdress. From the congruency of the surfaces generate tension and irritation. The simple black of the hairs reams against the colorful dynamic forms of the ornament.

Another early portrait displays a woman from the legs to the chest, seen slightly from below. Again individual characteristics are not identifiable. The gaze of the observer is directed to a dress with a bold floral pattern. The body doubles in a mirror. A small, self-absorbed gesture draws the observer as an interpreter into the scene. The woman holds a pencil in her hand. An attribute which allows detecting the artist herself in the portrayed? In a newer variation of this mirroring the bodies are shown in the same dress but averted from each other. As well the left body is cut hardly along the vertical. Instead of the realistic background of the room there are monochrome, black surfaces. The stylization is advanced.

The human body as surface, position and shape corresponds in these paintings with precise and present patterns. Which sparks a fascination of a direct, obvious presence. Every painting bears a new composition. Sultan Acar reworks her motives and deepens her formal escalation. The artist varies and continues on her unique path between representation and abstraction on with the reference to figurativeness stays a necessary constant in her body images as well as in her urban sceneries and in the seemingly abstract compositions.

Color stretches with a blurred focus have become a reoccurring subject. In one of the compositions parallel lines turn into a course of teeth and arches. An unknown forces has interfered with the underlying pattern. It could be the urban pulse which the painter converts into an abstract pictorial action with dynamic contours. In another work color stripe fields meander freely on the surface, meet arc and angle forms, in other works circle and oval forms are close packed or hover as collages of paper cuts bars, arrows and circular shapes in the image space.

In all their planeness the works of Sultan Acar create volume, in all their distance to representation reality echoes. Although there is no object or figure found, the dynamic surfaces engender the impression of tangibility and spatial atmosphere, seemingly pulsed by an assigned organism, paths and fields adumbrate fields.

Irritating and mysterious a side view, with a pattern made of rings and multi-unit ovals which stretches from the hair across the eyes to the nose and continues as a wristlet and a clock. In a tight symbiosis hair and cloth become decorating attributes of the female body. They do not only dress, but encase and disguise.

The view is obstructed. The effigy, the pose is characterized by ambivalence. Eyes are not detectable, stylized almond-shaped elements in the ornament can be interpreted as those. The hand under the chin indicates a self-assured foresighted, but also thoughtful, introverted attitude. Offensively the composition raises the question how ornaments can work as effigies. As well it also discusses practical where the design process has to stop, where vacancies create a greater attention and cause a bigger effect.

In another back view a woman wears a simple, sleeveless shirt with a round neck. The body, more plane than malleable, is surrounded by a dim shimmering color space. It is almost impossible to distinguish a fore- and a background. Figure and space lie in one level. Something else does provide depth. The pattern of the shirt, formally related to the hair lying in loops, on one hand appears as a surficial ornament; on the other hand the décor of

seemingly organic particles seems to be transparent, as if it would open up a view into the body.

Another variation of a penetrating gaze is found in a back view, in which skin and dress seem completely have become one. On a seemingly paper-like dress and naked arms appears a lush pattern like a outreaching tattoo. In this the whole body covering and entwining form the floral ramifications not only as a decoration but like inscriptions, notches, almost like burn marks. The décor seems to be animated and the body seems not to be only representation but canvas as well. Figure and form, ornament and person merge. The formal play links itself with a search which gets under ones skin to a search for an inner core, for identity. The artist who deals with her own way between the cultures and the minting and the personal characteristics linked with cultural configurations, patterns, aligned with surface determination allows existential and esthetical categories to merge.

On a rough cloth like canvas and frame in one – reference to a photography? – the effigy of a woman is attached. Only few lapidary lines mark facial features. As counterpoint to the reduced execution of the line thick curly hair frames her face like a three-dimensional hair tie. With a powerful gestural brushwork broad impasto color trajectories are applied across the nose and the chin. One more time Sultan Acar continues on her path of depersonalization and abstraction. In a thematically related image is a beige-colored bar over the eyes of the woman.

Inspired by Manet's famous painting "The Viennese: Irma Brunner" Sultan Acar dissolves the individual features of the portrayed into a cutout silhouette. The by Manet intended typology is here continued in the direction of further formal translation. The head is countered. The black hat by Manet is swapped by a cap. The bourgeois headdress of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is replaced by a sporty variant of the present. The gaze is slightly turned, more searching in an open space and directed to an unknown aim.

The head originates from a kelim, a Turkish carpet, cut out and covered with gold leaf. The rug has its own ornament. Due to material and pattern three-dimensional forms emerge. The gold addresses and enhances the idea of decoration. Gold as a symbol of power can be linked to the first name of the artist. The floor cover as a canvas represents her background. The glow is grounded. The combination of the two materials creates a confusing and ironic breaking point. The deliberate placement on the verge of kitsch extends the reading options.

Under formal aspects the artist expands here the panel painting into a relief structure. She paves with the leaf gold application concrete personality features and the material inducted three-dimensional surface and the presentation generates a three-dimensional space with distance to the wall. Substantive considerations correspond with formal accents.

In her new graphical works Sultan Acar refers to floating, through blurs moving patterns, which are reminiscent of earlier large-scale canvases of the artist. In those the artist incorporates light reflections in the glass facades of large rows of houses in Istanbul and translates them into a dynamic interplay of lines and forms.

In likewise present graphite drawings she spreads dot- and comma-formations star- and leave-like across the expanse. Graphite in various admixtures falls through different order types in ring forming sparkling constellations to the sheet. A dynamic cosmos of not exactly identifiable elements arises that that can be read as vegetable formations, microcosmic particles or spores and tracks. In one case the dot formation are contrasted with vertical line sweeps and allow thinking remotely of a landscape. In a variation with wax on pvc the circles and ovals merge to a thick drifting fabric with a seemingly three-dimensional surface.

From here one can build a bridge to a video titled "Painting". The video documents the development of an "image". At the beginning white color flows into a container which can be observed through a window. A black color stream is added. Viscous dabs follow, Pink and Blue dive, through the weight of the material the, at the starting point uneven, surface flattens. The relief pushes towards the plane surface that at the window in form of color streams flow together as abstract compositions.

In a life between two cultures Sultan Acar reflects on particularities and peculiarities of her roots and native homes over the form, over the aesthetic presence. Indirectly and directly she includes herself in her physical appearance and in her mental design potential in the picture. Shaped by different cultural patterns and aesthetical ideals, by approaches of form, self-image and external observation she allows her identity search to flow into her extremely sensual, atmospheric rich and at the same time formally reflected paintings. Remembering visual influences and inscriptions she becomes obviously freer in her approach of figurative and ornamental forms.

Here another than the decorative aspect of the ornament becomes evident, it is order and sequence. Sultan Acar varies motives and configures formations to rows and fields, where she plays with shifts and rotations, with the tension of repetition and difference.

The images fields prove that the tension between the recognizability and deviation is the stimulus of the composition. The variation indicates that the process of the image making is open, that artists are driven by different approaches, attitudes and perspectives.

Thus, moreover, allows interpreting Sultan Acar's process of blurring and distorting of contours as a pendulum impact between the appearance and disappearance of a memorized image, between the fixation and resolution of a visual find, between recognition and withdrawal of personal and aesthetic identity.

Rainer Beßling