

SABINE HERTIG – REVERBERATE

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The artistic medium of Sabine Hertig (*1982) is the analogue collage for which she uses contemporary information media and, above all, the classic print media as image sources. For the past 10 years the artist has been studying her seemingly inexhaustible stock of images, both intensively and meticulously, in search of new contexts and exciting dialogues, paradoxically knowing that this artistic appropriation and alienation means preservation at the same time: "I'm driven to enter this flood of images and respond to it by my fascination with images themselves. It's also an attempt to give value back to historic, archived images by integrating them in a new whole and thus drawing them back into being contemporary."

In her third solo exhibition at STAMPA, Sabine Hertig is continuing this visually stunning dialogue in the form of new, even more painterly-looking collages in colour as well as an extensive number of black-and-white compositions. The latter includes the monumental work *Landscape Nr. 16* which follows her *Landscapes Nr. 13-15* from the work series of the same name and – in the sense of the exhibition title "reverberate" – echoes back on them. That is true both figuratively and spatially, as her ruin landscapes are contemporaneously presented at Kunsthaus Baselland as part of the group exhibition "Zeit/Ge/Schichten".

With their clear composition, lighting and impressive depth, Hertig's large-scale collages recall paintings immediately. In close-up, however, detailed pictorial universes unfold in which countless individual stories are condensed in an opulent flood of images: "Everything is made with the analogue method of scissors and glue. (...) I continually have to verify their unity and composition from a distance. You could say they emerge from a painter's approach, because first I consider the tonal values of each fragmentary image. So in the initial phase of the process I don't consider the subject that's visible on the clipping but instead I try to look at it objectively, as if it were a patch of colour. After this comes a long-drawn-out phase informed by action and reaction (...) In the working process for all my collages I focus on a final image that opens up at the end of the process: a spatial collage made up of image clippings which, seen from afar, coheres as a whole. (...) It's about landscapes, about interior and exterior (...) To this extent both the moments of 'losing yourself within' and the associated 'focussing your viewpoint' from a distance play a part in the whole process, right up to the end. And this may also be communicated to the viewers when they look."

In this tension field or 'echo room', the observer's point of view is decisive for the perception of the works and is already included in the creative process: "As the work progresses I then pay increasingly more attention to the individual parts as contributors to the whole composition, and I place them consciously within the picture (...) At this moment I see collage as a conscious

tool, not just as a means of conjoining everything that surrounds me without any design. (...) Here I can see the potential for the contents of the clippings to abrade each other when seen up close. Only then does this field of discussion appear, where it's possible to fundamentally examine and challenge the contents. (...) It's about reworking existing images to make new images and overcoming their meaning from a distance."

And Sabine Hertig goes even further. In her most recent black-and-white collages, she has started using sandpaper as a 'drawing gesture'. This pendulum between figuration and abstraction occurs more often and sometimes ends in the destruction of the image itself. In this interplay ('reverberation') of collage, painting and drawing, the artist once again manages to expand the formal boundaries of the collage, coming up with new, surprising pictorial inventions. Even though they consist of heterogeneous pictorial worlds, her atmospheric collages present themselves as a painterly whole. Moreover, the combination of focussed and blurred parts of images refers to the means of composition used in photography.

With her work cycles *windows*, *reflections* and *mirrors*, Sabine Hertig is entering new thematic territory in "reverberate": mirrors reveal and deceive, promise and dismantle at the same time. Here, however, they do not function as reflectors, but as virtual breakpoints between inside and outside. In contrast to these 'screens' shortly before implosion, the breakthrough in her *windows* is already in full swing. We are confronted with exceptional states of porous inner worlds that are constantly penetrated from the outside and reflect back on us in their exuberant disorder – equally sprawling and intimate worlds in which we have to immerse ourselves.

Manuela Kraft

(Artist quotes from: „Sabine Hertig in Conversation with Ines Goldbach“ / Sabine Hertig – Scrap / 2018)