

Difference and Repetition

"Le rêve est une seconde vie. Je n'ai pu percer sans frémir ces portes d'ivoire ou de corne qui nous séparent du monde invisible."

Nerval

Helene Pavlopoulou is a panoramic artist. She combines the most heterogeneous objects and references in her works with astonishing virtuosity. Plants, animals, musical instruments, fragments from Art History, and the heads of extraordinary figures such as Julian Assange or Voltaire appear before the eyes of the viewer. The artist amalgamates these motifs into a cohesive whole with meticulous care and great finesse, using different techniques and forms of representation. A central element is the combination of a "real" image and its photographic negative. Through this combination, she deprives the viewer of the certainty of their point of view. The positions of the positive and negative of the image, that which is represented and that which is perceived, the inside and the outside are combined in a single piece. This raises the question - where is the image and where is the viewer? The viewer looks at the image, but at the same time, they find themselves within a view as if gazed at from the reverse of the image - the negative.

This quality of looking at and being looked at from the image also emerges in the artist's works through the depiction of eyes - those of an owl, for example - that gaze out at us from the canvas. This mutual interpenetration of gazes, of subject and object, creates a transparency that points to something non-visual.

The different objects and concepts depicted by the artist are also combined in a new formal logic that no longer has anything to do with everyday, objective causalities.

Pavlopoulou herself uses the term Palimpsest in connection with her work. This refers to the repeated overwriting of texts, characters, and contexts. However, this overwriting can also be understood as a gesture that suggests a psychoanalytic interpretation – namely, repression. History - whether personal or cultural - is constantly being rewritten and thus also overwritten. But that which is overwritten remains the bearer of a new version as a hidden history. It is probably no coincidence that one of the depiction techniques the artist also uses is collage, a method reminiscent of Surrealism. This serves as an appropriate means of establishing an artistic reference to the complex of that which is repressed, which cannot be

depicted. This unconscious, which Lacan calls the memory of what is forgotten, produces something new, without itself being able to return. In a conversation with Helene Pavlopoulou, she mentions Palingenesis, which in Nietzsche became the eternal return, as one of the ideas behind her works. However, that which returns does not appear as an object identical in time. Then it would be subject to permanence rather than to the process of disappearing and returning. The artist's works exhibit this exact quality. Discrete, concrete signs and objects such as musical instruments, horses, and human bodies were initially depicted side by side. In her latest works, she connects these through a subtle shade of blue. This medium - colour - creates a weightlessness in the image that is reminiscent of dream logic. This is yet another allusion to the themes of Surrealism - because only in dreams can we fly.

In Helene Pavlopoulou's works, the motifs and stories of the past and the repressed return. We can find their reference points in Art History and Mythology, but also in current politics. However, she does not show this as reification, but develops a sensual-seeming visual texture that elicits an impulse to expose ourselves to this forgotten thing that cannot be forgotten.

In her paintings, H el ene Pavlopoulou combines the medium of collage with representational, pictorial and conceptual elements in a fragile balance. In her "work in progress", over time she incorporated new layers of pictorial and conceptual quality, which were balanced through colour combinations. The pieces follow the design principle of collage and the overwriting process. The nature of these palimpsests is seen most clearly in the works which the artist invited Raymond Pettibon to overwrite with text. This process can give a completely new direction to the meaning of these pieces. These become methods to reflect several authors' voices.

Boris Manner