

Beyond Multiplicity in Matthias Schaufler's "Eichberg, Asum, Westerlau"

In "Eichberg, Asum, Westerlau" Matthias Schaufler visits and re-visits a multiply examined self in the places where the 'self' has spawned another: in memories, projections, thoughts. The canvas becomes a threshold, the apparatus with which an expansion of the locus is enabled, and the self enters the liminal.

Schaufler's treatment of the self as subject is a multiplication in itself, as it moves in constant dialogue between the question of the subject's identity as it is found in the literary genres of Romanticism and Realism (reminiscent of a Bildungsroman by Balzac or Goethe), and the postmodern break with this question: the identity of the self is a futile question if there is no singular authorial voice that can discern it. Rimbaud's famous quote "*Je est un autre*" becomes, in Schaufler's work, not simply "an other" but rather a multiplicity of others, all of which are embedded within the self.

Painted by hand in light, nearly translucent strokes, the depicted figures are in a state of liminality: they move in between spaces, in between stages of consciousness and even in between time. The young 'self' evoked by memory - a treacherous and unreliable source - is overlaid with a mental projection of a 'self' as another. The locus mapped out on the canvases is that of open meadows, prairies and pastures, of romantic places that are themselves as real as they are projected.

With his handling of the two-dimensional canvas as a liminal threshold, Schaufler's sedulous approach to the medium of painting becomes emphasized. A central perspective is outlined only in order to be transgressed and to send the viewer's eye to travel beyond the focal point and into the places above, outside and within it.

The constant movement betwixt and between is also evident in Schaufler's collages. Culled from mass media pictures, the collages are formal manipulations of the body in their own right, and serve as studies for the paintings as well. When leafing through the pages of glossy magazines, multiplications of the body are evoked; the body is, on the one hand, restricted to the aestheticized photographed positions while, on the other hand, a slew of references and semiotic connotations are projected onto that same body. Schaufler overlaps the de-subjectified body parts and allows the conglomeration of associations they are meant to evoke to separate from the realm of commercially dictated interpretations and enter the realm of individual projections. What these individual projections may consist of remains in the hands of the viewer.

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