

SUBSEQUENT FORMATION

Andreas Heller, Katarina Matiasek

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When we were kids my brothers and I once watched *Pete's Dragon*ⁱ on a Sunday afternoon, in 1992. The film's overall narrative and plot largely escape me, but one specific scene has inscribed itself vividly into my visual and anecdotal memory.

Pete is a young orphan. He's on the run, unprotected if it wasn't for his friend and companion Elliott. Elliott is a big green dragon, with pink hair and a tiny pair of wings. Elliott, who is capable of making himself invisible on demand, appears monstrous only at first sight. On closer inspection he is a playful and comical character, permanently failing to behave himself: actions that result from his immense physicality that just will not fit in a human environment.

As Pete and the invisible Elliott set foot into the picturesque village they seek protection from their evil prosecutors (the film being a Disney production), Pete

advises Elliott to stay invisible not to scare anyone. But when Pete playfully picks up a stick to drum on a bright white fence, Elliott mimics his gesture and does as his human friend. While Pete's touch only produces a soft rhythmic sound, Elliott's causes each and every board of the fence to crash down in a knock on effect.

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I am sitting on the window bench, my back leaning against the glass front. It's become dark outside while I was looking inside the room and at the sculpture that stands up from the floor like the outline of a sleeping dragon. My eyes keep wandering. Only some visitors I have observed touch or step inside the irregular-sized wooden frames aligning up in the shape of a foldable screen. Only some dared to dig beneath its upper edges and walk through the empty frames, transgressing



Installation view *subsequent formation*, Galerie Stadtpark, Krems. Foto: Stefan Lux



Andreas Heller, *Unbetitelt (Paravent)*, 2009/2010; Ply wood, lacquer, door hinges, dimension variable.
Foto: Stefan Lux

the room in a see-saw of right and left, left and right, back and forth. For those who dared, the object comes into being, measuring itself and being measured in relation to the walker's body size and pace, flexibility of movement and consciousness to choreograph their way through the installation in an attempt to make experience happen.

I hear her steps tremble in an irregular rhythm long before she comes into sight. She breaks through the adults' legs she had been hiding behind and arrives at the centre. Everyone's eyes rest upon her small body. She must be about three-years-old, hair blond and curly. She spins around once before walking through the third frame that is not much taller than her. Once she has come inside the fenced-off half circle, she continues to stumble alongside the piece, straightening out her left arm to feel her fingertips occasionally touch upon wood. The girl's upper body and head lean forward, in a way her legs *have* to adapt to the swift pace directed by the heavier part of her body giving into gravity. She walks a child's walk, feet turned slightly inwards. Her left arm points towards the object.

Unbetitelt (Paravent), 2009/2010, by Andreas Heller and *Split Horizon I*, 2011, by Katarina Matiassek featured in the double exhibition *subsequent formation*, in their conceptual making, both strongly anticipate the pres-

ence of the spectator in relation to the image or object on site. At first sight if the two works seem to unite in their visual investigation of the panoramic format and its romantic depiction of landscape, they also share the attempt to break the sovereignty and totality of the panoramicⁱⁱ by shifting perception from the *overview on* to the *processual exploration of* the artwork.

Such a shift obviously does not come as an unexpected turning point in contemporary art production, but the invitation Heller's and Matiassek's works offer to their audience positions itself somewhere between the self-sufficiency of the minimalist object and the usability of the participatory object or sculpture.

The two-part photographic panorama *Split Horizon I* shows an empty road heading towards a cloudy sunset. Matiassek transforms the high-definition landscape photograph into 'an ambigram using lenticular print technique.'ⁱⁱⁱ As curator and art theorist David Komary describes the technical effect of *Split Horizon I* in the exhibition text: 'The angles of the image segments of this ambigram are not arranged in the manner of conventional visual puzzles: one image does not transform into another as the viewing perspective changes. Instead, a substantial portion of the picture appears as white, erased.'^{iv} Moreover, the white shimmer that resides beneath the photographic image of the landscape alters the image from every new angle and viewpoint



Katarina Matiassek, *Split Horizon I*, 2011; Lenticular print, 110 x 90 cm each. Foto: Stefan Lux

inhabited. Once understood that beneath the image lies another, the technical effect incites to walk pass the image for it to unfold its variable character.

In clean distance to its opponent in the show, Heller's *Unbetitelt (Paravent)* appears like a prop in a performance set-up, ready to host a body or two in an imaginary choreography. On the other, if looked at on its own, the object carries an explicit reference to the two-dimensional, supported by its formal proximity to drawing. *Unbetitelt (Paravent)* outlines the silhouette of an imaginary landscape, while its form also serves as a directory for a possible walkway through the exhibition space.

What both works generate is choreography of the gaze instructed by choreography of the body as a whole, that organises itself around the inhabitation of the ideal viewpoint of the artwork and its subsequent fragmentation in sidesteps. By incorporating detours (in Heller's case the spacious installation of his sculpture in the gallery) or blind spots (in Matiassek's case the incorporation of a white image layer beneath the photographic depiction of a landscape), the unity of the image/object and its perception collapses. Perception comes fragmented, humble and instable. Even if we understand what the image looks like in its entirety, we will not achieve to see it as such. In both *Unbetitled (Paravante)* and *Split Horizon I*, it becomes apparent that

it is not so much the subject of the work, but its formula of creation and perception that are central to its conceptualisation.^v

Subsequent formation is the 14th exhibition programmed by David Komary since he started at Galerie Stadtpark in Krems near Vienna in Autumn 2008. Komary gained experience as curator and director of the self-organised and autonomous exhibition space *dreizehnzwei* in Vienna, which he initiated in 2003 and ran until its closure in 2007. Komary developed a precise exhibition format that combined the constellation of two contemporary artistic positions with a discursive contextualisation of the artists' approaches in form of a small catalogue accompanying each show. Komary's aesthetic feel for visual presentation and the creation of an environment that supportively stood back behind the individual works coined *dreizehnzwei's* peculiarity as an autonomous exhibition space at that time.

When Komary became responsible for the curatorial programme at Galerie Stadtpark he continued to 'offer constellations of two artistic approaches', trying to avoid a mere presentation of art works, but bring about an 'aesthetic and semantic compression, evoking another, third position.'^{vi} Coherently, a small catalogue sets out each exhibition's discursive context and Komary continues to organise his programme along

three similar thematic strands already investigated with *dreizehnzwei*: the construction of reality in the context of the medial, theoretical questions of time and space and forms of contemporary abstraction. All fourteen exhibitions have gathered around these three thematic strands, featuring artistic positions such as those of Roman Fehr and Björn Kämmerer, Yudi Noor and Peter Sandbichler, Siegfried A. Fruhauf and Flora Watzal, Haroon Mirza and Richard Sides to name only but the most recent. A catalogue entitled *Coprime*, to be published in April 2011 by Schlebrügge.Editor, features a selection of six exhibitions of Komary's current programme. *Coprime* intends to serve as an overarching publication giving insight into the correspondences between the individual exhibitions and the three thematic strands of Komary's current curatorial programme at the Galerie Stadtpark.

i The German translation of the title reads *Elliot das Schmunzelmonster*.

ii For a detailed elaboration on the panoramic in relation to Andreas Heller's and Katarina Matiasek's work see David Komary, *subsequent formation* in David Komary, Galerie Stadtpark (eds), *Coprime*, Vienna: Schlebrügge.Editor 2011, p. 43 ff.

iii Ibid. p. 44.

iv Ibid.

v See David Komary. Ibid.

vi David Komary, *Coprime*, in David Komary, Galerie Stadtpark (eds), *Coprime*, Vienna: Schlebrügge.Editor 2011, p. 11.

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