

Theodor Adorno once wrote in a letter to Walter Benjamin: „While the practical value of objects is lost with time (...) [they] accumulate significance as codes or ciphers.“ Adorno argues that with the loss of functionality an object becomes a cipher, that is, an item that externally continues to be a symbolic figure but that beyond its physical status has already amassed subjective intentions and meanings. While the reappropriated object remains an object to the outside world, inside it has become something „different“.

Marcel Frey's works are wonderful illustrations of this unstable condition, which allows things to be perceived as everyday objects and yet turns them into something different - an image. The gesture provoked by this process is as simple as it is clever: the „Couchtisch“ (coffee table) - the title indicates the function the sculptures once served - has simply been turned upside down. The glass table top is now the base and the linear, curved and semicircular table leg elements arranged on top of it demonstrate sculptural properties.

Display and sculpture have literally been blended together. This seems like a serendipitous composition when one considers the energy that Frey has expended in previous installations to provide a spatial frame to his objets trouvés by means of wall, table and floor surfaces. Anticipating the viewer's vision and movement, these supporting elements guide us through the world of objects, drawing attention to some elements while concealing others.

By means of the display system that he has developed for the presentation of his paintings, Frey creates a more fundamental connection between picture and medium. A kind of open fanfold construction, the display system makes the paintings appear like illustrations fitted between the folded pages.

This illustration-like quality is, however, immediately broken when we take a closer look. What we see are not everyday objects but abstract patterns, layers carefully arranged in space, the object-like nature of which is recognizable, though the process of silkscreen printing and replication has largely erased the analogy to the functional objects that they once were.

Technically this type of procedure is reminiscent of László Moholy-Nagy's photograms, which were also based on subtly ingenious object arrangements consisting of several opaque and transparent layers. In contrast to Moholy, however, Marcel Frey makes use not of light but of spray cans.

The potential space opened up is considerably larger than in Moholy's works, as the spray can is able to work both by means of gestures and constructively. In Frey's works the mechanical reproduction of completed forms yields a contradictory element through the freely swinging spirals or loops that cross over onto other image surfaces. It is no surprise that ultimately the negative print of a hand is mixed in among the pieces of paper.

In Marcel Frey's art the gesture is as central as the object. That this gesture has been captured as a motif is only logical. Finally it is as prominent an actor as the display and everyday objects themselves.

Christina Landbrecht

Marcel Frey (born in 1980 in Mönchengladbach) lives in Karlsruhe, Germany. He studied at the State Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe and completed post-graduate studies under Silvia Bächli. Solo exhibitions have been held at the Städtische Galerie Karlsruhe, the Kunststiftung Baden-Württemberg (Stuttgart). In 2012 his work was presented at abc - art berlin contemporary. He has been included in numerous group exhibitions in such spaces as the Museum Biedermann (Donaueschingen), Kunsthaus Baselland and Kunsthalle Exnergasse (Vienna). Marcel Frey has been awarded grants by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the state of Baden-Württemberg for the Cité International des Arts, Paris.

Galerie Thomas Fischer

Potsdamer Str. 77-87, Haus H
10785 Berlin +49 30 74 78 03 85
mail@galeriethomasfischer.de

