

PHILIPP GUFLER / I'M IN LOVE WITH A STATUE

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„They are attacking me, hypnotizing my eyes.

It is extending into the space, onto my body. My body is vulnerable. I'm loosing control.

My central-nervous system is numb.

It has to be removed, destroyed.“

from The Responsive Body by Philipp Gufler

Op Art from the 1960s communicates itself as an art movement of precision and control over the object and celebrates in overwhelming patterns the art of illusion. One of the heroes among Op Art's various artists was Victor Vasarely, who, at the peak of his craft, was moved by the idea to provide his paintings with an all-encompassing presence. Renault's logo, still, today, expresses how deep Vasarely immersed himself into each and every sphere of every day life. His foundation in Aix-en-Provence was meant to spread the artist's ideas as a complete and total work of art. Vasarely created 42 monumental works, sized six to eight metres, for his museum.

For a few days at the end of last year, Philipp Gufler, together with a film crew and a team of befriended artists, visited the museum in order to grasp and process the ego and egocentrism of a painter, who inscribed deeply into Op Art his own DNA. Diogo Da Cruz, Johanna Gonschorek, Richard John Jones, Evelyn Taocheng Wang, Louwrien Wijers, and Philipp Gufler intended to formulate the impact of the works physically. The optical effects of the large-scale images affect those present, the act of seeing triggers extreme reactions in the body. Sensory overload leads to dizziness – similar to that suffered by the author Stendhal, who, during a visit of Santa Croce experienced a nervous seizure in Florence in 1871. During this performance, the Stendhal syndrome in front of Vasarely's paintings constitutes a double-figure: through dizziness the impotence of the receiving attendees is revealed as well as the power the images hold over their senses.

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In Gufler's video installation *The Responsive Body* (2019), questions, directed at heteronormative, masculine self-conceptions of an art movement, arise. Gufler channelled texts by the British Op Art artist Bridget Riley into the film and thus provides her with space in an egocentric museum. In the exhibition, the film will be projected onto a foil, which resembles with its silkscreen pattern one of Bridget Riley's designs. Thus, the projection brings Vasarely, Riley, and Gufler in a state of interaction. Gufler's video installation deals with essential themes, which are intrinsic to Vasarely's art and its reception: control over patterns and the act of seeing, the repetition of reproductions, the power over reception as well as narcissism and self-adulation.

The mirror case and the triangle-shaped mirrors on the first floor in the gallery, paraphrase these motives. The pink angle, too, which gay concentration camp inmates had to wear visibly during the time of national socialism, formulates the obsession with geometric figures; twenty years later, Op Art extracted through the calculable forms of geometry their identity. From the mirrors away leads a way to the unfinished castle Herrenchiemsee, purchased by the Bavarian King Ludwig II, who planned Versailles' reincarnation on the Chiemsee island. In the office of the gallery hangs a quilt, which Gufler dedicates to the dreamer and self-appointed "Grail King" Ludwig. In the exhibition *I'm In Love With A Statue*, a dialogue between time and space develops; the Bavarian king is at one and the same time partner and antipode of Victor Vasarely's. Herrenchiemsee of 1878 meets the foundation of 1976; the great mirror gallery of the castle on the Chiemsee island reflects not only are the phantasms of the king, but also those of Vasarely's project on great art – their heroic masculinity is satirised.

Burcu Dogramaci

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