

Kathrin Racz

Kathrin Racz's paintings grab the viewer's attention directly and immediately. In the *Loeb Treppenhause Gallery* recently a visitor went straight up to a picture with a dog and declared, „that's me!“

They may be mirror images, the paintings by Kathrin Racz, but they are always human images. Even if they depict goats or masks, houses or dogs – the theme of Kathrin Racz's art is always the human being. Often these humans appear without clothes, single, in pairs, in small groups or anonymous crowds, as a face, a body, with bellies well-fed or muscle-packed calves. Regardless whether fat women or blue dogs constitute the subject matter – the images always reflect their subjects' inner pain and their necessity to find a way to live with themselves and in society, to adapt, to delineate and to demarcate themselves, to push through, to hang in there, to participate, or to keep out.

The topics and the dynamically direct visual language have their roots in Kathrin Racz's artistic development. Born in 1956 in Thun/Switzerland, she worked as a teacher for nearly twenty years. But following her creative artistic desires and her innermost need to creatively transform life impressions and social processes, she always also worked artistically during those years. For a long time she concentrated on puppet theater, film, and photography. Toward the end of the 1990s she began to draw – at first in sleepless nights, later also during the day, one subject at a time: shoes, lamps, purses – the simple objects of everyday life rendered in crayons began to fill the visual dairies of Kathrin Racz. Since 2003 she has been working exclusively as a freelance artist.

In her intense engagement with crayons and soon also with oils, Kathrin Racz developed her own powerful technique. Her expressive paintings often reveal under their colorful, at times naïve, surface surprising ambivalences. A cozy house tilts, perspectively distorted, into the realm of the uncanny; behind the victoriously made-up face of a soccer fan lurks deep disappointment; the privacy of a couple is haunted by the shadowy presence of a third person.

The human being in Kathrin Racz' work is an insecure individual, always ready to hide, seeking shelter from life's unresolved questions in a fat body or behind shrill masks. But masking is revealing and often betrays the very thing that it is supposed to hide. Only the masked person still believes in his firm grip on himself and his role, but seems fragile and vulnerable to others. The paintings of animals, too, appear like traitorous masks, and even the more recent series of houses. They are more like shells for the soul, unstable life constructs, whose pointed gables and half-timbers only hint at a security that is immediately revealed as a mere realm of wishful thinking. These houses offer precious little protection from the corrupt world; their inhabitants are lost behind their windows, and dark wolves are howling at their doors.

Alice Henkes
(trans. Hans J. Rindisbacher)