

Magenta – Talk 1 – 10.5.20

Interview between Andrea Iten and Max Spielmann

Andrea Iten: Magenta. A warm welcome to a format, to an installation, to a place where we are right in the middle of a space in time - we can't even say it anymore, from Corona. With the right distance. Two meters. In general: How do you perceive the colour magenta?

Max Spielmann: Something between pink and purple. Well, I don't really perceive it as a colour of its own. Although I know that for four-color printing it is central, a basic color, so to speak, complementary to green, I perceive it as something in between.

Andrea Iten: Nine different images of women. What do you associate with these photos?

Max Spielmann: I just asked myself that before. The theme is about the future; how do we curate the future? To whom does the future belong, and does it still belong to these women, who are actually representing the past here in this installation, an unredeemed future. I am thinking of Sissi, the wife of the queen or emperor of Austria, where we all know the film, is portrayed as a peasant girl. What's all in here? That is actually a question back to you, who did this work.

Andrea Iten: This work was created over several years and actually started with the painting of cups, i.e. vessels for drinking coffee, household objects. I covered her with this magenta paint, because I had to do that. And with that I put them into an artificiality. Perhaps Meret Oppenheim's mug also occurred to me that as an artist one often has to think things like splitting off or thinking away in order to bring them into a different state. And then I put it on and added several of them and then added a table. And then at some point pictures were added, pictures that I found again and again when I was standing at the tram station, in what is known in Switzerland as the Brockenhaus. And then I noticed that the women kept looking at me out of this window, somehow asking me the same questions, and what struck me was that they had never worked with pictures from the past. I never liked that and I always thought that I liked being in my time. I like to work in my time as an artist. I always find possibilities in it to redefine roles and images. A few years ago I thought; no, now I need the cups. Then I took possession of these portraits and collected and put them on display. And then when I had a curator from Thessaloniki here; Lydia. Then I said, "You, now I have these dishes and now I have these pictures. I wanted to somehow influence these pictures with color. I imagined quite brutally to use this magenta to affect the faded photographs, and she said, no, no, how about the frame. Ah, that's exactly what I thought, to frame these wonderful gold frames, this framing, to create a different space and a different disposition, so that these magenta reminiscences, the modern printing techniques as well, could be combined with these old photographic techniques. And with that you immediately gave me the word curator - because a curator was involved in this studio. That's a role that plays in our artists' work time

Magenta – Talk 1 – 10.5.20

and again. How you want your work to be understood, who looks at it, how. And with that I would also like to ask you back - Curating. A term that has accompanied us for a long time. What would that be for you at the moment?

Max Spielmann: I automatically associate curating with curare, with cure, with care, from where the term originates. What I have dealt with in the last year professionally and actually this care can be understood in different ways, as caring, as being attentive, as caring for someone and also as staying in trouble - as being worried. And I think when we think about the future and curating, there is this question: What are we worried about? What do we care about? That probably takes up a whole dimension and hopefully a different dimension than what we know about curating, in the best sense, as someone who cares about a theme and collects works, perhaps also co-develops them, produces them and brings them into the discourse about an exhibition. That's something that's already been happening in recent years, even decades, this curating has produced some question marks, it's at best a very powerful, important position. But of course it's part of a system that ultimately ends up in an exhibition in the broadest sense, even if the exhibition is broken up in the process. And there is the question: If we think into the future now and think okay: how do we deal with climate, for example? There is this English expression "walk the talk" - not just talking about it, but doing it. What does that mean for us? What can be the task of art, of design, of curating, of dealing with a future that is so uncertain - so the future is always uncertain, but for us now, in the face of this uncertainty caused by a small virus, it is even more visible, more tangible. This; No, it cannot go on like this any longer. And what can we do to nurture it? Maybe it is, I don't know, not necessarily for myself to go out into the streets and into barricade fights or I don't know what. That is also a romantic idea of fighting. But I think that maybe we can do this perception-altering, how do I take these images when they have a magenta rim? How do I take the sound of the environment when suddenly the threshold of traffic is gone and I can hear in the depths, hear in the layers? How can I convey to others that something new is happening with this different perception? That is certainly always the beginning. But I don't know more at the moment.

Andrea Iten: That's a good vote, inasmuch as it also encourages me again to do something sideways, like taking something and putting something into another context and taking these images, these people who have flowed back into the public sphere somewhere from an estate. To take them out of this broken house, to take them into my studio, to charge them with something; namely in this magenta, this fuchsia colour, and to alienate them a little bit as well, to be able to look at them differently again. And for me this colour and these pictures are also a little bit a mirror of our time at the moment, because when we talk to our relatives. My mother is 92, she asks: What's this crisis we're in? And what great crisis may we still remember? It was the war. And how was it then? Yes, it was blackout in Switzerland too. Yes. Did we obey then? No, of course not only. I went over to the neighbour's, even though everything was blacked out, and I had to get something. And when I came back, I was in another garden. Because there was no more light, and I took a detour to get home. And actually, when I look at these pictures, I think it is this generation that is talking about this crisis and now our generation and our young students are talking

Magenta – Talk 1 – 10.5.20

about this crisis that we have now, with Corona and actually this decades-long, unscathed time in Switzerland of boundless growth. And that actually forces me to stop, to sit down in the studio, with things that I have taken out of the Brockenhaus and covered up, in the sense of upcycling. And I'm really interested in rethinking these times of enormous growth, up to, as Niko Paech says, what do we need anyway? And for me that's a huge, strong theme. Maybe I really had to intuitively get these images because we are so over-imaged that it's actually like saving images, taking them out of the Brockenhaus, looking at them, slightly changing them and putting them together again to initiate a new cycle, to use the word new to mean something different, moving sideways not forward in the sense of consumption, but sideways in the sense of reflection. And that doesn't have to mean at all that we constantly look back and say; in the past we didn't have such wealth. Switzerland was still the great peasantry then, we had still planted, our great-grandparents were still on the farm. That is still the case with many, many of my friends. And then now these questions about the future and our students, who deal with food in a very sustainable way, who are looking for alternatives, who are opening repair workshops, in other words, this driving back and at the same time bringing the discussion back to normality, in other words, returning to maximum consumption. And I really think that this is a very, very important time to pause for a moment, and that is why I want to create this format Magenta. Magenta means for me here now at the beginning, to cover something with a skin at the first moment to take it out of time, to create this timeless, where you can think about it, how about if and as if, and not to dream the great utopia anymore, but only this thin skin of color, which takes something out of use. Yes, actually you mentioned before; curating the future, cultivating the future, staging the future, thinking the future, helping to shape the future and also allowing the future but future future future. That is what we really don't know, don't know yet. So also structurally. A question that occupies me more or less day and night at the moment. To whom does this future belong?

Max Spielmann: Yeah well, she certainly doesn't hear us, because hopefully we will be here in the world for another 20, 30 years or more. But we are a generation that perhaps has to take responsibility, also for what we have received and can take responsibility because we have a certain experience that is valuable. But on the one hand, the future belongs to those who are next, and it also belongs to those who have gone before, to the promises that have not been fulfilled, and what means a great deal to me in Corona is the question of the narrative of simultaneity. Because at the moment we are in a situation in which we can perceive everything simultaneously and tell it differently, because we don't have the narrative of modernity. Everything goes far and gets better and better. Because we haven't really had it for thirty or forty years. Only we haven't found a new one yet. Somehow we still believe in this forward. And when I look at Sissi again, then she is actually a person who has been sampled an infinite number of times, where we can tell the same thing over and over again. When she is here in this combination, she is a voice for me, also of a simultaneity that is very different and probably also 18th, 19th, early 20th century. We sit here, and we are actually a choir together. And how did this choir come to speak for the future, and that is the task that all, regardless of generation, have. But of course the next generation, which is growing into this time now, is the future. And we

Magenta – Talk 1 – 10.5.20

are only those who participate in order to come into another time. And to perhaps come to a conclusion in this conversation; what I will contrast with Magenta is the green of the blog, where I can gather this multitude of such stories. Of thoughts that are not pronounced now, or that are perhaps pronounced, but do not carry enough in the conversation, to network and to create a part of this simultaneity, which is now extremely noticeable in Corona. This oral of simultaneity, of many voices, is something that has become our everyday life in the last 30 years with the internet, with social media. We still do not know how to deal with it, it will not change, simultaneity will be a part of the world.

Andrea Iten: I actually find this a good answer to the question: Who does the future belong to? I think that's what we really want to ask and find out in this blog, in this room or in this installation or what's coming, also from acquaintances and unknowns. We are here in my studio. Studio rooms, they belong to the past. What does a studio mean to you?

Max Spielmann: Laboratory - in other words, a working space that is an experiment. An experiment is also always something that has a time limit. When something comes out of the studio, it is immediately a work of art, maybe it will be exhibited. Even then it can still be something that continues to change. It continues to change anyway, at the reception, what is done with it and it is given out of the hands. As long as it's in the studio, it's in a workroom, it's unfinished. And perhaps it remains unfinished when you leave the studio, but you take it out of the studio. You give it into another state. And the studio for me is the state of unfinished things that are in development.

Andrea Iten: That's actually wonderful, because I think I really only want to exhibit this Magenta installation by sharing it conversationally. And while I was making it, I was already thinking whether I would set up a long table here in the studio, cook for a change, invite people and talk about artistic works, and while I was doing it, I was already thinking; no, actually I don't want to do that. And now I realize that now it's this time or this interim period that I want to use for such conversations, and actually I always have to say; for me as an artist, this studio is something that changes every time I come here. For me, it is in 99 percent of the cases that I go out there happily and actually come in without any big plans. Of course there are works that have been started, of course there is always paper to draw on, and of course there is a computer. But the computer is actually without a network. I have deliberately separated it here, also to get into this possibility of experimenting very quickly. And I always go out happy because it changes and solves very small things for me. That's what makes the artistic work so unique for me and that's why I really want to carry this into the future. And also make it accessible to students, because it's not really the market, because it's not just the object, but because it's the possibility to solve things or ask questions and leave them unposed here in the room, in the studio space. I know this from African dance, which I have been doing for years with Jacqueline Moesch-Mampuya. "Faire un atelier" was always a movement to try out, to bring the body into the position where it has play, where it has run out, until it

Magenta – Talk 1 – 10.5.20

clicked into the movement and until it felt right. I think that we have to take such spaces during and after Corona, too, in order to bring something like this into balance again and again, so that we can really shape this future or pass it on to future generations, that it is very provable, that such spaces are really there for everyone. And for me, this also has something to do with the color green. That's the second thing that came to my mind with Magenta and that will also accompany our blog. Since Corona broke out, this has immediately driven so many people on the balcony and into the garden. And that was not at all stupid or just compliant, but it really is a need that curare also means to plant, to create a garden, to take care of something it grows, and to take care of these fine plants. And in this I actually see a future and also a future of the big cities, which are so concreted over that we really create such studios, in many places where there is greenery and flowering and where there are butterflies and bees again, so that we can develop what is now so without air traffic and with clean water and empty cities and the CO2, which has very probably been reduced massively, without being forced into quarantine, because the time will come afterwards. This is already loosening up a little in Switzerland. And I don't know what will be in a year or two. But I would like to have such in-between moments with this installation and this blog and this work that we are now starting with you. I would like to do it that way and yet I'm getting out of the studio. Because there she still has something to discover and find, an object to put on the table. An object that I wanted to give you. That is this green cup, which belongs to magenta at this point. I wanted to say that this is quite the opposite. So I would like to thank you very much for the first conversation and I am very curious who, how, media, will participate next in this installation.

Max Spielmann: We're curious about that.

Andrea Iten: And now we drink a real cup of coffee.