

ANDREAS VAN DÜHREN

Pure Hands Are Something Else

Nothing is more characteristic of the intellectual than his skepticism about what seems obvious. Mere visual appearance and especially evidential power that lies solely in such appearance, simple plausibility immediately arouses reservation about everything that seems self-explanatory, about a truth that is not legitimated by mediation. The gesture is subject to the same suspicion: it wants to create meaning *all at once*, without generalizing the course of events and resists convertible reconstruction; it breaks through the context and presents itself as erratic – not least this brusqueness arouses distrust, as if of a protrusion of archaisms one had presumed were suppressed.

Every artist is certainly also an intellectual, except that for him also all mediation is initially form and visual appearance does not uncouple itself from things; if the only objectivity is in the visible, then the argument is superfluous. He finds truth only in what is made, anyway; and a work always resembles an outrageous assertion. Incidentally, he is familiar with a certain arrogation of the silent expression that is essential to success.

Now an artist has produced a small catalog of gestures, seventy-nine pictures of his own hand held in various ways in the recording area of a scanner. It is useful to take the trouble to imagine the procedure by taking it seriously in its literal form: a stripe of light wandering along the scanned object, registering it in as much detail as possible, and reproducing the reassembled image.

One could continue the description endlessly, using each term anew for a more precise understanding and imagining the seemingly simple act, while it ostensibly aims at greater objectivity – making the act a riddle by making it visible. *Of course* it is conspicuous that it is a hand being sampled, and that it requires countless abstractions to make it concrete; also the contrasting interplay between conveyance and dissolution... overall, that the viewing of a work of art becomes an unceasing reading and this in turn becomes an almost continuously allegorizing reflection that nonetheless clings to the given – as if to provide instruction in the complementary work of reception – this makes *Gestures* significant in the simple sense.

George Hadjimichalis seems to have the resolute aim of exploring phenomena, as if the corresponding law of nature expressed itself in this; whether he makes it easy or difficult for himself by underscoring the concept of method – at any rate, a thinking that sees classification as the outstanding principle of order, while invoking the idea of the archive, is thoroughly ahistorical: the artist dismantles every fullness and puts it together into a clear object of viewing.

In the current work, one soon notes the less rigorous rules of the game (some gestures are unambiguously like a slogan, others merely expressively charged, and some live from their reference to a form whose vague variant they provide); the interest may once again have merely been to extract as many results as possible from the experiment by means of differentiation – as if a hand tried on ever new masks... the question of how good it looks will have guided the decision more than once.

But what was decisive was not to painstakingly illuminate the hand and photograph it on an open surface or in front of a studio wall – if one briefly imagines it, one is astonished that the makeshift procedure of technology was even closer included in the conception. The hand thus appears in a space as if on a stage, but without any audience, as if in a box – not a bright or dark chamber – and as if in a dream, and one could speak of a dream aesthetic, almost of a look: the “documentation of unreal events”. In isolation, the gesture develops a paradox: extracted out of a societal-historical field in which it received its meaning, context, playing field of conventional references, and actually even its definition, the sign becomes irrelevant, while it *comes to itself*. As one knows and hardly ever considers, colloquial speech consists of all kinds of metaphors, abstractions, a paragon of the inauthentic constantly passed on;

without the agreement that it is itself pure nature, this colloquial language would disintegrate into a possibly poetic stuttering.

What is already true of the word as a dialectical point – that it allegorically rigidifies in the absolutely explicit – is also true of the gesture, which loses itself in the self-presentation of its significance: once it is meant itself, it goes blind. It may be that this work merely *represents* the phase of mediation in which a piece of information is no longer registered by the consciousness of either the sender or the receiver. Then again, there is the view that art consists in nothing other than the emphasis on arbitrary details – selection and emphasis that place the detail in relationship to the entire text. And perhaps this work, *Gestures*, makes a statement: that relationship cannot be depicted.

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