

Nose up!

Judith Hopf

+ films by Atelier Hopfmann

July 4. –September 9. 2008



Judith Hopf *Schulen*, 2008

Super 8 mm film, 2 min.

Nose up! is the title given by the artist **Judith Hopf** to her exhibition in the Badischer Kunstverein and is already an important reference for her new works. In **Nose up!** Hopf focuses upon the phenomenon of the history of lying. One symbol frequently used in literature for lying is the human nose, whose incessant growth in length - as in the case of Pinocchio - or sudden fall from the face - as in the story "The Nose" by Nicolai W. Gogol - is evaluated as a sign of dishonesty, instability or loss of control. In fact, though, the nose possesses a distinct potential for resistance, inasmuch as it destabilizes the social system based on truth and the administration of justice.

In **Nose up!** just as already in earlier projects, **Judith Hopf** is concerned with a critical investigation of widespread social conventions. With a sharp-witted and humorous perspective, Judith Hopf brings to light "typical" behavior patterns, role clichés and power relationships – frequently in her own environment of cultural production as well. What happens when well-rehearsed daily life slips out of control through an unexpected change of direction or through the sudden appearance of disturbing factors?

This sort of irritation is smoothly continued through the formal realization in the exhibition space. Thus the visitors are confronted, right in the first room, with **Bambus** (Bamboo, 2006/2008), which is composed of drinking glasses and whose seemingly quite shaky construction runs contrary to all exhibition standards. The state of not knowing whether the bamboo will or won't fall, or what would happen if it were to collapse, and what other possibilities could arise serves as an example for Judith Hopf's manner of working, and it points towards alternative possibilities of consideration and mediation. Just as the nose proves to be an unstable terrain of the body, just as the lie undermines supposedly prevalent forms of communication, so do the sculptural protagonists inject confusion into our pre-established systems of knowledge and reception.

The series of computer prints presented in the large hall and entitled “**Nasen**” (Noses, in collaboration with Martin Ebner, 2008) refers to the Op-Artist Bridget Riley and participates in the tradition of an art history of modernism but immediately puts this aspect aside in its spatial staging. The repetition of the motif in various colors is an ironic commentary on serial production as an artistic system which generates both objects and meaning. Then the “**Vasen**” (Vases, 2008) illustrate the attempt to produce three objects that are exactly the same – an endeavor which, in the procedure of painting ceramics by hand, must inevitably fail. This incapacity for learning and for adapting experiences is also attributed to the frogs which present themselves in quadruple reproduction in “**L'Éducation impossible**” (2008).

The nose is the motif which is variously repeated in the exhibition and thereby makes reference again and again to the primary theme of the exhibition. In the new short film “**Schulen**” (Schools, 2008) produced for the Kunstverein, the various thematic levels of the history of lies, resistance and “L'Éducation” all come together: the viewers must first point their noses upwards in order to be able to see the film in the hovering tent-like construction. And in the film itself, the nose is at the center of the plot. Against the background of school norms and standards, the pierced nose becomes the conveyor of non-conformity and resistance. The lapidary response to the question “How was it?” runs “Just like always” and at the same time convicts the protagonist of making an untrue statement.

Judith Hopf conceives of her artistic practice as part of a collective process. Many projects have been realized in collaboration with other artists and theoreticians. Since 2003 she has created videos, together with the filmmaker Deborah Schamoni, under the name **Atelier Hopfmann**. Two of them, “**Hospital Bone Dance**” (Judith Hopf/Deborah Schamoni, 2006) and “**Elevator Curator**” (Judith Hopf/Deborah Schamoni/Clemens Schönborn, 2005) are being shown in the exhibition. Both authoresses are linked by an interest in the adaptation of pop-cultural knowledge and a critical-humorous analysis of traditional modes of behavior. Their protagonists find themselves confronted with unexpected situations in which they gradually lose control and their value systems are called into question. In “**Hospital Bone Dance**” the customary working-day of a nurse becomes unhinged as she encounters a series of mysterious events and figures. The eeriness of experiences which intrude suddenly and unexpectedly into an orderly daily routine is cited in the installation “**What do you look like? A Crypto Demonic Mystery**” (2006): Similarly to an X-ray, the body appears reduced to a skeletal framework here, and the stability of the biological system is rendered visible in ghostly schemata. In “**Elevator Curator**” it is the self-construct of the European curator for contemporary art Elodie Schneider which becomes unsettled through an absurd encounter. It is characteristic of these works in the exhibition that they lay down neither didactic nor moral guidelines. Instead they characterize the various possibilities of a subtle disturbance of the system and the ensuing enhancement of the potential for opening up new spaces for thought and action.

Judith Hopf (* 1969 in Karlsruhe) lives and works in Berlin. Her work was shown in such famous places as Tate Modern (2008), Kölnischer Kunstverein (2008), Wiener Secession (solo-show, 2007), Lisson Gallery, London (2007), Whitre Chapel Gallery, London (2007) Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris (2007), De Appel, Amsterdam (2007) and Portikus, Frankfurt a. M. (solo-show with Henrik Olesen, 2007). She currently teaches at Funen Art Academy, Odense (DK) and was lately announced as professor at Städelschule Frankfurt a.M..