

Paolo Moretto

PROFILE

Paolo Moretto stems from Verona and has been living in Hamburg for almost 20 years. In his opinion the connecting element between both cities is water, more precisely: they are characterized by having a river with a port and related industries and infrastructure. They are differentiated by the attitude to life of the spirited, often spontaneous and sensual reacting catholic Italians on one hand and the honest, sometimes reserved and cool behaving “Hanseatics” with their emphasis on business. Moretto has benefitted from that tension as well as from the cities as independent areas – many of his works pick out water as a central theme and balanced tensions between assumed infringements provide them with an ease, which reminds sometimes ironically and sometimes melancholically of naivety, without being limited to it.

Therefore, Moretto’s works cannot be broken down to such an easy to be caught theme as “water”, because the meaning of water end what it can stand for, is far from being fix and different in each work. As such a trace of openness, specific patterns, forms, terms and contours can be found throughout Moretto’s oeuvre whereby the individual motifs may appear repeatedly over a longer period of time in various contexts. Behind this is seriality and recognition, alienation and montage, but rather as a reference to concepts than their realization. Moretto is well-read, he knows the turns of the current theory and understands the provocative potential of philosophy. But he neither wants to copy its ideas nor to show them in performance. He feels rather encouraged by it to transform objects of everyday life into symbols by putting those into the perspective of art history using his own means of expression. Their meaning is never fixed, since they are not limited to a unique reference. Instead they can be interpreted as strikingly as they can be thought of auto-reflexively. Therefore, the works of a pattern-series are not collocated. Therefore, cited forms do work like “Ex Voti” without their explicit differentiation from their originally religious contexts. Moretto’s game with significance has reached an openness, which does not make it seem to be of vital importance, but which grounds in forms and materials of the living environment.

Moretto’s sculptures realize the dynamics of the standstill, by making the solid, hard materials represent filigree structures, flowing movements or the trace of a time related change. Familiar objects like toys or disposable items are added emphasizing the contrast between form and utilization. At the same time, the sculptures always also indicate the working process, being

recognizable by its accentuated coloring as well as welding seams or by the integration of original functions of parts into the new ensemble of the sculpture. This playing around with materiality can also be found in Moretto's works in painting, which can mostly not be limited to a portrayal using paint and brush, although Moretto has sketching abilities and develops painting techniques. Yet, these never stand alone for themselves, but form a part of multiple structures. The faulty fabric of an unsellable jeans might be turned into a canvas, the patterned wrapping paper of a cheese monger may be manipulated for a serial, abstract motif. Collage and montage are equally citations and techniques, keeping the prefabricated forms and patterns present and at the same time determining the perception of togetherness by difference and beyond fixed meaning. On the surface of the drawing they play with superficial effects, initially providing access to other levels of perception. Forms, colors and material in autonomy and combination are symbols at any one time, the relations of which are being newly negotiated, if historical references or biographical allusions, if techniques of quotation or fading are considered – or also the possibility to combine those.

In the works of Moretto temporality is playfully present and fixed as well by using concrete, familiar images as by backgrounds and painting surfaces. Magnified calendar sheets serve as background texture, images of art history as references, invoked on the current surface symbolically and by words. At the same time not only the framework of allusions remains at deep historic dimensions, but also the distinct oeuvre can become a point of reference. Thus, work- and motif series, respectively, can refer back to much earlier approaches and provide new perspectives on those. Lines through Moretto's oeuvre can be drawn and judged differently, if based on new works. Thereby Moretto is not self-referred, but plays with the concepts of interpretation and work-expectation, which are fulfilled and yet undermined at the same time. Often enough it is found objects and discoveries, which turn out to initiate new projects after a certain latency period. It may take some months or even some years to run through all their options. The traces left throughout Moretto's oeuvre by such developments do not only remain visible in the artist's studio for a long time, before getting comprised, but not fixed, in a mobile or an installation.

Words and script are a fixture of many of Moretto's works. They open another level, when possible meanings and open interpretations come into play. They can be read as quotation working via the font as well as the wording. They can add a private level to the image while at the same time opening up historic depth or verbally negating image references. As for all other means of the work it is valid here also, that surface effects are not pitted against depth effects, but that only the tension between the various

possibilities opens the spectrum and makes refractions visible, which belong to Moretto. Being an admirer of Piero della Francesca and Fausto Melotti, El Greco and Martin Kippenberger, who would like to meet Sigmar Polke and Renato Gattuso over a beer, he can just not be pigeonholed or classified into styles. He has found himself and art, but not at a certain point, but in a process leading always to something new, without having to know what is next. The past forms the basis of and is direct reason for “being-there-and-such” of Moretto’s works – but only because the openness to take an own look of what is present in life, what is visible in heads, words and behaviors, can be shaped from there. That look can be an ironic comment or statement. That does not only depend on the viewer, but also on the moment within a dynamic movement, at which it is ventured. Insofar the timeliness of Moretto’s oeuvre does not necessarily lie in their novelty, but the viewer will discover surprises consistently. Moretto’s oeuvre does not have to be new, finally we are well beyond the avant-garde. But to know that art is a part of life, which does neither ensure rent nor pension, but which is vital to him, shapes his play with the materiality of intangible processes to assign meaning as well as the slight irony in dealing with supposedly well-known concepts.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Can your oeuvre be outlined in five words? What words would that be?

PM: This is difficult, but it is possible as some kind of a game! The words: mobile, stable, red, vinyl, freedom.

What else would you like to try yet, are there goals or the appetite for something new?

PM: Leonardo da Vinci has inspired me to go for painting. I will never become like him, but I am driven by the “universal geniuses” of the Italian renaissance like Piero della Francesca, who were philosophers, mathematicians and artists. I would like to have a working attitude like Max Ernst, who paused from painting by sculpturing, if he needed a break. And then there is also the dream of making a motion picture – I already have the idea for it.

How and when does an idea actually result in a project?

PM: This is complex, because there is not that one way. It may take more than one year until an idea, which I may have derived from a motion picture or may have had during a conversation, becomes something of my own. Then it is about playing around with the idea, to give it a go. I do not do accurate plan sketches, I rather meditate on the idea. But it is a long process to find a suitable form for an idea, in that respect I try a lot.

Are there imprints, opinions pervading your oeuvre?

PM: Yes and no, now and then things reappear, thoughts remain present. It is hard to say, as the idea of a theory does often only partially become reality. I believe in the theory, I am almost an idealist in that respect. But it will never become pure practice, life. I see that there are many problems, for which art is not a solution, but as the question exists how things must be made, how problems must be solved, art exists.

Are there other artists, whose oeuvre inspires you in such a way, that it also can be found in yours?

PM: Yes, as already said, there are so many great artists. But if something can be found, then only after having been affected by a transformation process, which often results in something very different.

Which thinkers have shaped your views?

PM: Kant is strong – and Nietzsche, who has almost said everything. Dostoevsky is a great author, but historical writings are inspiring, too, like the history of the Peloponnese by Thukydides. And Serge Latouche's thinking about abundance, that is so close to the materiality of things.

What is your understanding the big word "Art", then?

PM: It is about freedom and about how you take it. Art is not essential for life, not like bread or air. But it does nothing bad, it does something with us, that would not exist without it. The feeling when working, that is important to me, but art is also something different, something standing next to the things of the environment yet also working with them. Today I know that a pension is important, that a diploma is often not bad. But I also know that I want to make my art the way I do.

What aspects of your oeuvre will continue as lines?

PM: Actually, I think very little will remain. We are beyond the avant-garde, we play with so many things, which already existed before. I have never seen marble statues as perfect as in Italy, in Florence for example by Michelangelo. Therefore, I have never made such statues, those are there and they are perfect, there is nothing new for me to add. But I can play around with other material, with leftovers, with things that would be thrown away otherwise. Those are not "eternal", but they allow for a new, a playful working. And that is my contribution here.

So how do you see your position in art (history)?

PM: Not that bad – I have been looking for a long time and believe that I meanwhile have my own history as an artist, which has lines itself in art

history. It is often about acquiring own skills and interpreting ancient themes or techniques in a new way. This requires a sensitive feeling for new ideas, which are currently en vogue – I am thinking of Picasso. But I am in the middle of my life and I just know, that I have to do my thing and I just hold this true for me now. I am doing my thing for me and I think that “having to make art” is something, that can only apply to someone, who knows what life is about and how it feels to actually have a life story. But perhaps this once again applies to me, only?

Do you want to provoke with the paintings? Or would you want other reactions of the public?

PM: I wish for concentration, attention to the composition, for technique. But mostly I am looking forward to impressions, to other analyses and a new way of thinking provoked by them. In fact provocation is an old principle, the great philosophers have always been agitators.

Where would you like to have your own exhibition?

PM: At the Prado! They are doing so few exhibitions of contemporary artist there, that would be a dream. And just now they are exhibiting works of El Greco, who was so brilliant...