Forestillingens materielle kvaliteter

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Det er relevant å referere til kjønn i denne sammenhengen. Maleriet er del av det mest kjennelige av de kunstneriske medier. Her henviser uttrykt kjønn til den systematiske kategoriseringen av hvordan enkelte kjønn skal representere roller og utføre spesifikke sosiale oppgaver. På samme måte som levninger er tildelt roller som skal forestilles, er maleriet også konvensjonet tildelt rollen å forhandle særlige representasjoner som forestiller eller opptrer som noe annet enn seg selv. I slike tilfeller er denne forestillingen av kjønn blitt utformet for å rigide definisjon og begrensing av subjekter innenfor konvensjonelle sosiale og politiske roller, så vel som oppfatninger av kroppen.

I sine undersøkelser fokusserer Kenneth Værpe på en forståelse av maleriet som bryter med konvensjonelle koder. Han tilnærmer maleriet rollen å representere noe annet. Dermed er farger malerin

Performing matters

In the theatre script "Six Characters in Search of an Author", Italian writer and poet Luigi Pirandello informs us about six fictional characters who only exist to be part of a larger story that is narrated by a theatre play. Because of their nature, they are condemned to exist and constantly look for an author and actors who could perform the story they belong to on a stage. Kenneth Varpe's painting seems to address the moment in which paint acts a Pirandello's fictional character, looking for an artist that would want to develop its unfinished story.

Kenneth Varpe paints a matter that performs the role of a painting. He portrays the moment of passage in which matter rests, waiting to become some other representation. The artist shows paint in an intimate moment that is as delicate, sensual and sweet-and-tender as seeing a naked body lying down inert. Varpe stages this moment of timeless rest in which paint exists before becoming a painting, eventually. On the one hand, Varpe's work explores how paint as matter performs a genderless identity. On the other hand, through this performative gesture, the artist invites the spectator to value the importance of detaching painting from its conventional role of representing something else. In Varpe's work, paint exists in a temporary passage between being a representation and a matter.

Referring to gender in this context is appropriate. Indeed, painting is the most 'gendered' of artistic media. In this context, the term "gender" is used to address a systematic categorization for which certain genders has to perform specific roles and social tasks. As much as women as a gender are assigned roles to perform, so too, paintings are conventionally employed to convey certain representations and thus to perform the role of representing something else rather than its own self. In recent decades, this understanding of gender has been contested for rigidly defining - and confining - subjects within conventional social and political roles, as well as within certain understanding of the body.

In his research, Kenneth Varpe focuses on understanding painting as a medium that breaks through conventional codifications. He assigns to painting the role of representing something else. Thus, coloured paint is acknowledged as matter performing the

Værpes praksis er en baggrund for hans kunstneriske praksis som en del af en væsentlig teknologi, der giver grund til en nuanceret og forskellige praksis.

Kirsten Værpe profonde researches these questions on the mediam. In his work, he stages picture without its ‘performance’ mask in a break between jumping on the stage and performing some other roles. His interest sparks in looking at painting as a medium that ‘queers’ its socially accepted gender role. His work explores the fluid transitions between role and function in painting, giving form to the representation of a shapeless medium that ambiguously hides behind the representations that it conveys. Fluidity refers to the organic horizontal and reversible interpretation of ideas. In her essay “How to Install Art as a Feminist,” art historian and curator Helen Mølsgaard employs the term “horizontal” to highlight how a feminist and queer approach to art operated necessarily alongside opposite narratives of exclusions, rejection and positions of power. Mølsgaard proposes to read art horizontally, looking at genres, media and themes through an intersectional perspective. This approach advocates reading artistic practices as part of an exciting exchange where things, thoughts and beings coexist in forms that are yet to be defined. Following a similar philosophy, feminist pioneer Simone de Beauvoir, claims how “one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman.” Drawing from de Beauvoir’s perspective, philosopher and art historian Judith Butler suggests how actions shape the person we are and the social role we wish to perform. By naming those acts ‘performative,’ Butler emphasizes how we can bring into life roles for ourselves that would not be conventionally assigned to us. Butler points out that for a woman to induce that body to conform to a conventional idea of the ‘woman’ and thus invites to detach certain notions of femininity from certain notions of the body. Butler also emphasizes how gender is a role performed to inhabit the world.

In talking about painting as a ‘gendered practice,’ it is important to stress the ability of the medium to ‘perform’ different roles, and thus to pass-through-forms. Butler uses the term ‘performative’ to refer to the principal characteristic of performance as a gesture, one that enables the passage through different forms. ‘To perform’ means to pass through various shapes and conditions. When it is used to name a medium, the word ‘performance’ is frequently linked to body action. In the action of making a painting, the canvas and the paint also perform certain historical understandings of painting, for example, as a representation. Værpe rethinks this action and plays with the notion of ‘fluidity’ to address in his paintings the reversible shifting movement between various roles. In his practice, paint performs one of its many identities, fluidly moving from being a painting and being a raw matter.

The series of paintings representing paint gives form to the rhetorical trope of the autoauteur, one that by contradicting its own premises aims at affirming them. Værpes meticulously precise and detailed representations of paint show that the medium deceives the spectator — it is not born but become painting, to paraphrase Simone de Beauvoir. Indeed, by looking at his early career video jette representationen af maling viser at medet fører betydnelsen bak lyset — det er ikke færdet men blir til et maleri — for en paraprase fra Simone de Beauvoir. Ved at studere video-ardefører fra Værpes tidligere karriere, utviklet under hans studier ved Chelsea College of Art & Design i London, aktualliseres malerien på en ny måte. I visuelverket ‘Dansc Exercice’, optræder skyggen af den unge Værpe dobbel, og hans refleksion ses ser vi til ærlig kamp med skyggen af hans alter ego. Dansende foran en lysebræt filmtrækket sin skygge med dens refleksion projekteret på veggen. Lidskabet for at læse gennem er også tilknyttet i et anord tidlig videosej alt ‘Bag exercise’ hvor vi ser Værpe med en plastpose som naktet kommet af maven hans og til slutte dekker hele ansigtet og visker ut hans identitet. I Værpes praksis er hans forsker på at gennem og føre bak lyset, visuelle paraprase for tredjepartemed Hvem som alltid befinder sig i studier af ‘umælitetsidé’.


Irene Campbelli arbejder som uavhengig kurator og forsker. Hun er baseret i København men lever og arbejder i transit. work developed during his studies at Chelsea College of Art & Design in London, the recent series of paintings find a new raison d’être. In the video work called “Dansc Exercice”, the shadow of young Værpe appears doubled, and his reflection seems to battle with the shadow of his alter ego. Dancing in front of a cone of light, the artist films his shadow and its reflection projected onto the wall. Yet the desire to play with hiding is present in another early video work called “Bag exercise” where Værpe is seen expelling from his mouth a plastic bag that slowly covers his face completely erasing his identity. In Værpe’s practice, the attempt to hide, conceal, deceive seems to paraphrase in visual terms the ambiguity of living which takes place always in a state of ‘in-betweenness’.

Værpe’s practice has a very developed sensitivity towards existing in transitional forms. His works explores gender roles and fluidity not through the content but through the medium. The painting series displayed in the show “Fluid Pose” is a queer statement to defy certain understandings of painting. Interestingly, when paint is ‘unstaged’ without performing its role as a painting, the most intriguing, ambiguous and yet fascinating moments slowly begin to manifest themselves.

Irene Campbelli works as an independent curator and researcher. She’s based in Copenhagen but lives and works in transit.

References: