

## **RUDOLF POLANSZKY – retrospective**

**25.05.-04.08.2018**

### **The Peculiarity of the Joy Reference**

**- on Rudolf Polanszky**

#### **Conceptual text for the catalogue by Herbert Lachmayer**

With the ease of directness, Rudolf Polanszky's work presents itself as a "golden thread" with peculiarities. By no means is it necessary to show its contextual derivation, as it practically stands for itself. His aesthetic peculiarity does not borrow its vocabulary from contemporary attitudes; however, when considered from within its context, Polanszky's work tends toward unpretentiousness.

The ambiguity of his playful references may derive from, among other things, the way in which his work hermetically projects what it taps into, remaining at the same time a fragment of the whole. In assuming a transparent approach, the artist plays with bending to the same extent as he does with the gestural pathos of porousness. In a pose of fragility that could be compared with Giacometti, in terms of the constructive medium of a redundant rhythm and the profane epiphany of a temporal-spatial stretch into mirroring symbols and parables, he opens up with humor and irony an always unexpected, novel aspect of formal intervention in a language of form that, to borrow from Adorno, "unravels into itself" (in "The Unraveling of the Arts," Adorno compares the two-dimensionality of painting with the three-dimensionality of music) and which refers always in new ways to changes of perspective, to surprise. Polanszky does not have to pull back, ever more strongly, from semantic fields of meaning; he is satisfied with a kind of *exact*, and exalted *allusion*, which holds in its structure the spectrum of multiple interpretations. Precisely this independence of his objects inspires with a sheer myriad of possible rhetorical-associative parameters, word plays in divergent genres, and a sifting through fields of meaning that have grown obsolete.

In a grotesque way, Polanszky's work oscillates within the contingent claim of creating modern art per se, without thereby having to be seen as being exclusively rooted in it, yet not before a background of quasi-Dadaist associative leaps, although a Walter Sernerist component can be seen as rubbing off from the deeper core.

To lay open a work by removing the outside layers, for example in Polanszky's work *via negationis*, leads the observer in part past the artist, rather than opening up a new approach to the work and person: to simply posit that Polanszky is no recycling artist would be defamatory, already through the comparison; rather, a statement should develop from the

content. It would also be misunderstanding to functionalize art as a device for "animist reprocessing."

What he is entirely successful at is the aestheticizing of the *object*, and to exemplarily position this aesthetic in order to remain in the picture. It is the material's arbitrary character, its apparent coincidence, which mediates the irony of a precise strategy. Critical, without transporting "art ideology," Rudolf Polansky demystifies that sacral-aural suspicion which may sprout in some affirmative field, and instead he turns to a method, very much in the sense of Marcel Proust and his major work, *In Search of Lost Time*, with no outside pressure but out of an inner necessity to remind of something; whereby each "recovered time" from the artist's unconscious past enables a critical awareness of how to experience the present, and is therefore also useful for one's own experience of reality. In this regard, a panorama of disillusionment is created out of the fragmentary collages of each forgotten part, which gives the observers the conclusiveness of something realized about oneself, to which there is, in a sense, no other alternative than their present tense of memory. If Proust, very much according to his psychonautic distinction (following from Bergson), differentiated between "mémoire volontaire" (voluntary memory) and "mémoire involontaire" (involuntary memory), the artist Rudolf Polansky asks of his audience to reconstruct anew the free-fantastic fields of identifiable memories and with a practical, lifelike aesthetic, he brings to the present an unmistakable moment of memory.

Polansky is a Hermes of ambiguity, interplaying temptation and deception. On one hand, his artworks are self-fulfilling as quasi-ironizing old chestnuts, awakening tender feelings and even tenderness itself, and on the other hand, his partial gruffness creates a disillusion with the desire for smoothness in balance and harmony. The artist fascinates with his sharp disappointment in that which can't be predicted. Polansky's art can formally tilt the beholder's attention with its reference to the content and attitude of expectation. His art roughens up the fields of projection and its formal diversity, for all of its differentiation, may therefore serve to simulate the appearance of "unity," which the artist employs precisely to break from or irritate familiar expectations about viewing. Polansky is no *grande sublimateur*, who, in a great Freudian gesture reveals hidden fractures of repression and/or allows them to reawaken. He is also a stranger to the stylistic method of manipulation using illusionist contrivance. Seen from a cognition-critical angle, Polansky provokes with aesthetics. Vis-à-vis the common claims of art, he offers no ideological critique with familiar rules; he rather criticizes the very process of constructing illusions, by which art all too willingly succumbs to uncritical reception.

He thus routinely intends to make material the medium of his content, without making the medium, emanating quasi outwardly from within, or the material *itself*, into the message. It is precisely there where the diversity of his intuitions denies a reality critique of functional, functioning, or especially functionalized reality, which is sometimes carried out *otherwise* like a materials-science gesture.

The artist additionally brings into his irritation repertoire, early and late modernist work – or in other words he bumps up against the contingent border of its fixation in reality and narration. In the sense of a self-critically prolonged modernism, which never becomes a *post-* to consequently signal a general ending of history, as in, for example, the characterized model of a "pizza of the present" (*title of a planned exhibition by Herbert Lachmayer and Edith Almhofer*), the present work still presents the attempt to show art as a medium of

irritation, embracing the irrationality of releasing the rationally undefined.

Polanszky's subjective realism critique owes itself to his "ability to avoid," or to its "requiring avoidance." The above-mentioned poetic coverage of the writer Marcel Proust, in between the consciously controlled "mémoire volontaire" and the unpredictable "mémoire involontaire," in which he, as also mentioned above, bases his work partly on the psychologist Henri Bergson, from whom concrete thinking can already be derived. The artist Rudolf Polanszky masters this with his deconstructive dialectic, which is as much to say that by using his "poetic avoidance strategy," traditional associations may be made obsolete, in order for him to then make them into associative play (affinities) – although never a flat reflection – and enable them to be experienced in a newly framed contemporaneity. Polanszky does not have a thing for analogy as a fantasy mechanism.

He therefore trusts the intervention of the negligible, in order to form, precisely from them, a principle of negative dialectics, as the Frankfurt philosopher Theodor W. Adorno is known to have developed extensively.

Adorno's feeling for freedom, as it is perhaps mediated through his specific art productivity as a composer and as it is genuinely laid out in his reflections on art, are aligned with those flashes of moments of joy that manifest at moments of remembering as well as recognition – and Marcel Proust, as that unparalleled author of "À la recherche du temps perdu," was able to succeed in this, even if it meant having to take into account a series of strategic disappointments.

In contrast to Proust's method of authentic remembrance, as an unconscious reflection of *mémoire involontaire*, for Adorno the memory of past events structures itself as a utopian core, which at a melancholic distance to the reacquainted present embodies a residue of joy that we idealistically strive to imitate in the production of art. Thus the Frankfurter philosopher taps into the melancholia of a lost bourgeois class and its artistic/avant-gardist productivity as the substantial site of *professionalized sadness*; while for Marcel Proust involuntary memory – which was irreplaceably lived out in the thickly illusionist layer of – past – moments of joy, first necessitated a self-critical literature production and stood for itself as a mechanism of disillusioning. After all, with Proust the sparks of freedom are constantly hidden at the same time that he suggests them, by presenting an elusive, vis-à-vis a temporal, entropic deterioration. The philosophical writer takes the, indeed only, principle of production from an identification with suffering in the reconstruction of lost joy, as a commitment towards improving life in society: it gives him the role of the producer-oriented flaneur, who, precisely through this *separation through disillusionment* emancipates himself as productive loner and critic from both the nobility and the bourgeois milieu. Alone the reconstruction of a spontaneously triggered joy along with an individual as well as class-specific conglomerate of social analysis upset by positive life goals, is understood by Proust as a cognitive advantage which makes the heads of even the wittiest Proustians swim and blurs the novel's figure assignments to partial moments of real persons in Parisian life: thus the writer – that hybrid first person narrator – appears to be allowed the possibility to create the actors in his novel, a patchwork of personalities as it were, from the particularized shares of the self, which can confront him in thoroughly heterogeneous ways. His own claim, namely, one of a comprehensive *neo-reconstruction of Marcel*, makes it almost impossible to draw conclusions about personages which seemed to reappear or even impose themselves as actors in the novel, since it had always been meant as a construct of personality parts that

form mysterious collages. Proust's work unfolds a panorama of particularized self- and other-deceiving assemblages – driven by an indulgent striving for truth. Thus the systemic disappointment becomes a process of recognizing life which is presumed to be lost: this obsession with the reconstruction of an unavoidably avoided joy reveals the writer's sublimated share of personalities as his own lifelong writing motivation and production dynamics.

This does not mean, however, that the joy lost *at* the time can be recovered. It is at most the enlightening process of recognition of one's own life that can be found, that of one's individual family as well as that of society and world history, forming the fragmentary rear-view mirror of a future whose quality likely consists primarily in coming to light at the end of the day. As if propped up on stilts, fate's actors could risk making careful movements by taking greatly decelerated steps. Comparable to Marcel Proust's productivity strategy, Rudolf Polanszky's aesthetic process *finding joy in flashes – as the aesthetic sensation of a super class* – is a trick taken from time.