

The past few years, the artist Ekaterina Zacharova has travelled broadly and depicted her findings and the people she there experienced in everyday situations in a successful exhibitions "In general public" and "Panta Rhei - Come Along!". In doing so, she always managed to capture a mood in snapshots. In the later European series she made it her goal to create a feeling for the atmosphere of a city by studying the different postures and facial expressions of the people who populate it. Their body language and charisma convey the character of a city on an intuitive level, but much more precisely in their own way than the Eiffel Tower or the Trevi Fountain in the background could ever do.

This unique way of depicting interpersonal relationships is also taken up by Zacharova's latest series "Two". This is geographically broader and also contains motifs of hectic New York street scenes, smoky Cuban bars and dimly lit high-rise arcades in Hong Kong.

The concept revolves around relationships, the dynamics of the masses, but also the individual and isolation. As universal as the topic is, it seems that everything worth mentioning has already been said about it. But "Two" does not try to present the viewer with a finished story, but leaves a lot of room for discussion. One sees only a brief moment between a vaguely indicated prehistory and the not yet written future, which does not lay claim to high interpretation and leaves both directions open.

A balancing act that is already indicated in the title "Two" and that runs through the entire exhibition. Because, apart from its strictly mathematical meaning, the number two is of particular relevance in practically all cultures.

We call two complementary elements that together form a unit as a pair. Those that oppose each other or even exclude each other create a polarity. In philosophy one speaks of the principle

of bivalent, if something has a truth value

"Right" or "wrong" can be assigned, ethics and religions deal with the duality of

"Good" and "bad", while Chinese numerology, in its religious form, sees a polarity in yin and yang that determines the entire cosmos.

In a more everyday context, when you think of two you might think of togetherness and lovers. Likewise, the two, as the first majority, is a condition to be able to speak of a community at all. A single person as an individual always perceives himself only as part of or in contrast to something. The cycle "Two" underlines this existing tension in a special way. The viewer will recognize harmonious units as well as apparent dualisms in the encounters shown. However, if one looks at only one point of a duality, one will inevitably find imperfection.

One of Zacharova's great strengths, coordinating technology and content, is once again impressively revealed in this cycle. While her earlier pictures were still strongly naturalistic in their color palette, the colors have become increasingly expressionistic since the New York phase in order to be able to capture the garish contrasts and rapid movements of the metropolis. At the same time, the picture of a kissing couple with a sunny beach scene on their backs was taken. This symbol of carefree, young love is supported by the airy, light colors and an almost naive color palette dominated by pink and soft blue.

Scenes of darkly lit bars, in which couples throw furtive glances at each other or peer over the bar table at the other, create a contrast to this. The atmosphere is charged with eroticism, frustration, or mock indifference. The sometimes uncontrolled, almost abstract colors refer again to the situation in the action, which could collapse at any moment if the colors keep flowing.

One could also ask: What do relationships look like today, in a time of fast pace and constant change?

A large space is also given to solitude in the crowd. Do we have to strive for community more than in the past? People are increasingly communicating via social networks, every piece of news is spread within minutes of its publication, and yet many pictures show scenes that are probably very familiar to most, but at the same time reflect a paradoxical development: while people are in a confined space sitting together in cafés or public transport, for example, the isolation is still convulsively maintained: the gaze can get stuck anywhere - newspaper, advertising column, smartphone - but the other's eyes are taboo. And yet many of the pictures show how men openly observe women and vice versa with an almost voyeuristic curiosity, but contact is almost never made. A particularly impressive example of missed opportunities is a scene at the airport in which all travelers are sitting waiting for a change, but clinging to newspapers, cell phones or a cigarette like a lifeline, without paying attention to those around them sit around.

Regardless of the diversity of the situations and people portrayed by the artist, what stands out most clearly is how universal all the scenes depicted are. The place of action, the circumstances and the portrayed themselves may be different, but all are determined by the same, fundamental striving for love, happiness and security. This insight is all too quickly suppressed by other factors, especially in today's world. In the media, news of Charlie Hebdo, Pegida, and wars give the impression of constant, not bridgeable conflicts and create generalized enemy images that rarely apply so comprehensively. The cover picture of the exhibition shows a young couple in Paris in front of the Sorbonne University - wearing a red neck scarf - like a reminder of the old values of "liberté and égalité" and an outlook on an enlightened future. An evening scene in a Parisian café again shows a colorful get-together that works uncomplicatedly side by side. As a complete work, the cycle of images reads like an allegory on solidarity, community and life-affirming optimism. Art as possibly the only universal and accessible medium can capture this humane message in a special way.

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