

Hanspeter Hofmann

Tanzende Substanzen (Dancing Substances)

The title sounds cheerful, with a dash of melancholy: in the latest *Flash* exhibition at Tony Wuethrich gallery, Hanspeter Hofmann combines familiar and new elements from his repertoire of forms, which Christoph Doswald once referred to as the “Hofmannian matrix.” Small-format, framed drawings from the last two years are mounted on plastic sheets printed with motifs of dancing men – but to these later. The drawings in pencil, colored chalk, gouache, or marker on paper playfully continue Hofmann’s organic-molecular structures that have emerged since the 1990s from his interest in the natural sciences and aesthetic questions. They are visualizations of “thinking about thinking,” according to the artist, states of consciousness or concepts of perception put to paper, in which the brain’s coils give birth to colorful loops, bubbles, or balls, sometimes forming sharp-pointed crystalline structures.

In some cases, Hofmann also includes digital prints, thus combining, as is often in his work, technical and manual, digital and analog forms of (re)production. In the most recent drawings created this year, figurative representations replace the abstract formal structures: the before-mentioned dancing men, or rather, men couples. Some seem to move like dervishes or techno dancers, dissolving as it were, another couple, this time finely contoured, dances something like a tango, two tie-wearing men hold each other by the shoulders and hips while doing the sirtaki, another couple nestles together in leather harnesses... the scenes could have taken place at company parties or in gay clubs, they oscillate between melancholy, tenderness, exuberance and ridiculousness.

Hanspeter Hofmann finds the templates for them on the Internet, in print media, has photographed them himself or had them generated by AI programs. They were implemented with different graphic means; like in the abstract drawings, outlines and autonomous color fields vary, sometimes the figures dissolve into individual dots or strokes, which makes one think of Pointilism or rather pixels – the digital is always present in the creative process. A selection of these motifs was further rendered on the computer, augmented and printed on large white plastic sheets, which in turn serve as background tapestry for the drawings.

Like the previous series *Neue Typen*innen* (New Types, wrongly gendered), Hofmann alludes humorously and not without self-mockery to the changing conditions of the art business. And these can be perceived as threatening for the male species in several respects. Not only does the centuries-long dominance of white men in museums and on the art market seem to be slowly being replaced by other players, also artificial intelligence is creeping into art’s operating system as a competitor that is increasingly being taken seriously. And what do real men do when the system collapses? At best, what Anthony Quinn and Alan Bates do in the legendary final scene of *Zorba the Greek*: they embrace each other and dance.

Eva Scharrer , Berlin 2023