

Josef Strau
Hypostasicisms
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The aim of this one-time experiment called „Hypostasicisms“ was to emerge into the so called Neoplatonic metaphysics, to very practically concentrate on the possible applications of their most idealistic discourses as on the understanding of the forces of the universes with their distinct spheres, in between spiritual movements, gravitations and attractions, the separations of times and the different worlds in general and in the particulars on observing the sphere of the here and now during the moments of creation in the production of the works exhibited. Zooming down these Neoplatonic inspirations and models, down to the everyday practice of the artists temporal studio situation in the extensive dimensions of the Viennese Ringstraßen areas building. Possibly or actually finding a new philosophical Sachlichkeit in the most metaphysical methods.

The production was also an attempt to re-appropriate earlier production procedures and repeat their exercises, by hopefully rectifying them. Like the performing space of the lamps, building a temple model, the postertext for the angel, mimicking and retouching childhood art historical objects, such as Doré's *Jacob's encounter with the Angel*, the internal and the sea monster, or the unexplainable attraction to useless poster folding. Drawings of the yellow light, burning soft metal, and coating it on found trash like bonbon chocolate box trays. The dark power of magnetism, gazing at the Porphyrian tree of life, collecting stones without knowing their names, confusing the canvases with a ballpoint pen, mimicking writing, obsessive paper folding, etc. But now, all these exercises, often kept unexhibited before, connect and suddenly make sense by observing Plotinus and his paradoxical drifts of thoughts. Like the phenomenon of feeling to be observed during moments of Hypostasis while connecting the separated materials.

Creating a limited time of exercise, often very basic and exclusively chemical. For instance, mostly in the burning and extinguishing of fire of metals like tin or lead, or the sulfuring connecting them to the canvases or the found objects from trash just through fire exclusively without glue, or by magnetizing the objects and connecting them only with particular stones. But always in dedication to the advice of Plotinus. The phenomenon, for instance, that while elaborating the most simple material experiments, in the very present moments, the vast thoughts might descend into them through inspiration, as if performing the universe's central force of Hypostasis, as Plotinus teaches to experience the descent of the inspirations into the sphere of simple material movements into the Hypostasis container.

Plotinus' pleasure surely lies in the attraction to the not-so-clear, the attraction of not really understanding, as he praises regarding another philosopher, "but he seems to teach by metaphor, not concerning himself about making a doctrine clear to us, probably with the idea that it is for us to seek within ourselves as he sought for himself and found."

It is better to choose something that cannot clearly be understood, and that "it is weariness to keep toiling at the same things and always beginning again," invoking the great spirit of not understanding, at least during the time while approaching or even entering some new field.

The attraction of the things and the thoughts that are not so easy to discover, as we find inconsistencies, but still those works appear to be more attractive than the very consistent ones, getting much more light from them. Maybe such pleasures and attraction derive from a deep sense of the pleasures of the liberation from the intellectual imprisonments, for instance, of the consistent and the clarified.

In permanent respect to the advice of Plotinian philosophy (Plotinos, c. 204 - 270 CE), although reappropriating them in very freewheeling modes of interpretation and pseudo-Plotinic text, that in order to emanate a thought into the material sphere, one might better use materials not only without such thought but by actually negating it. Bringing oneself into a situation of self-refusal to become an instrument of such thought and having faith that such thought will emanate by its own power.

Saying how to become hypostatic as a cultural producer who is willing to withdraw from all prefigured assumptions, not out of nihilistic desire (although including it at times) but to emanate thought in general, or in metaphysical ways even, and by the way revealing the reason why sometimes using stupid things can be higher and intellectually more demanding than any translating production attitudes.

Interestingly, the greatest or, as many say, the most influential philosopher, Plotinus himself, did not care to be understood.

Text by Josef Strau

Josef Strau (born in Vienna, Austria) lives and works in Vienna. Institutional solo exhibitions include Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2020); Künstlerhaus Bremen (2017); Secession, Vienna (2015); The Renaissance Society, University of Chicago (2014); and Malmö Konsthall, Sweden (2008). Significant group exhibitions include Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn (2022); the Busan Biennale, Busan, South Korea (2020); Neues Museum Nürnberg (2020); Kunsthalle Bern (2017); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2016); mumok, Vienna (2015); Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (2014); the Liverpool Biennial (2014); Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2013); Generali Foundation, Vienna (2012); and SculptureCenter, Long Island City, New York (2011). His work is in the collections of the Bundeskunstsammlung – The Federal Collection of Contemporary Art, Germany; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the ZKM Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, Germany.