

## The **EGON SCHIELE PROJECT** in the Photobastei 2024, **MAKE ART NOT WAR**

Fru shows 7 large-format pictures that are all directly influenced by the Austrian artist Egon Schiele (1890-1918). They are bodypainting photographs, some of which are very similar to Schiele's pictures or interpret them quite freely. Experience has shown that viewers are confused by the fluid transitions between painting and photography, which make it impossible to categorize one of the two techniques. For this reason, a making-of video will also be shown in the exhibition, in which the process of creating five of the seven pictures can be followed. Schiele's explicit eroticism and sexuality in the depiction of his figures is further emphasized by the realization that the bodies in the photographs were also painted in the intimate areas. It is assumed that body painting as the first expression of visual art has existed for 300,000 years. Fru shares the view of Victoria Bateman (Naked Feminism - Breaking the Cult of Female Modesty) that women (people) are respected and valued regardless of how and to what extent their bodies are covered and/or veiled or how they sit down. Having grown up in the 1970s, he is astonished by both the resurgence of dress codes (modesty and reputation) and the deliberate and encouraged circumvention of these codes (porn, the adult market and the OnlyFans business) and the associated double standards.

PROJECT DETAILS

INTERESTED IN SUCH PICTURES

MODELS WANTED

MORE ABOUT EGON SCHIELE AND THE PROJECT



Fru (Beat Frutiger), born in Bern in 1952, lives in Kaiseraugst near Basel and worked as an art teacher from 1981 until his retirement in 2013. He publishes under the pseudonym fru.ch. Influenced by the performances of the 1970s, Zen art and his training as a make-up artist, fru combines bodypainting, photography and Zen art in a unique way. His art is a play between the photographic image, which represents reality, and the painting or sculpture, which symbolize an ideal. Since his training in 1981, his work has been concerned with the deconstruction of fine art, body art and photography in order to reconfigure the elements into a result in which the image is, as in Zen teaching, "the finger pointing to the moon".

He has been working with his models Sabine and Sonja for 10 years. In their discussions after the photo shoots over a good meal and a glass of wine, they contribute significantly to new ideas and design possibilities. In the long time they have worked together, Sonja has also learnt to realise his ideas on his body when Fru himself is modelling, which often happens.

Fru also enjoys working with new models. They are always an inspiration.

## **CIS-STANDING-GIRL and TRANS-STANDING-GIRL - with model Emily**

"Cis" means this site. It's the place I know and the place where I stand. "Cis Standing Girl" is a photograph of a young woman called Emily. It is deliberately modelled on Egon Schiele's famous painting "Standing Girl" and shows his sister Gerti. Photographs claim to depict reality. But in my picture, the only reality is the color on the paper dress and Emily's body. That's a bit difficult to understand. That's why a video shows the creation process.

"Trans" is always beyond, on the other, opposite side and "trans" is the unknown place, far away from me. "Trans Standing Girl" shows Emily as a trans woman who is in a transitional stage from man to woman. The picture is also a photograph that looks like a painting and shows reality. In her book about Egon Schiele, Jane Kallir describes his uncompromising honesty in his depiction of female sexuality, which is still disturbing and shocking even after a hundred years. From today's honest perspective, we must recognize that sexuality and gender identity exist in a fluid spectrum beyond the binary.

For 30 years, I have been dealing with the fact that people cannot be natural. With the help of clothing, hairstyles, cosmetic surgery, tattoos and coloring, people completely reshape the appearance given to them by nature and change it again and again over the course of a lifetime. Their will to create is therefore first and foremost reflected in themselves. The human being thus becomes a work of art in the truest sense of the word, and "Trans Standing Girl" shows the transition from a natural stage in the here and now to a stage beyond, a stage of art.

## **VESSEL AND CONTENT - with model Sabine**

At the beginning of a longer art project, I provide several "vessels", a working title, an empty book, an empty exhibition space or an empty calendar. Then I wait with an open mind for the content. Often I don't realize at the beginning whether and how they will fit, as with Egon Schiele's painting Child with a Nimbus in a Meadow of Flowers.

At first I was simply fascinated by the contrast between the emptiness of the nimbus and the child filled with flowers. As with the wine, this content (emptiness and fullness) has developed further in the vessels I have provided, into this picture in this exhibition and into a chapter in my as yet unfinished new book. I am pleased that the Enso also refers to Roberto Carbone's logo, which makes this exhibition possible.

Parallel to the increase in opportunities or "vessels" in which art is presented (churches, exhibitions, galleries, books, internet), there is a decrease in artistic content and artistic use. Whereas in the Middle Ages art with biblical content still had a purpose, since the 19th century the maxim has increasingly applied: Il n'y a de vraiment beau que ce qui ne peut servir à rien (There is nothing really beautiful except that which is of no use.) This is essentially about formal, content-free aesthetic designs without a purpose. In Cubism, works of art still represented something, albeit in an abstract or anti-naturalistic form, for example the reality of war in Guernica or, in Mondrian's 1912 work, an apple tree in bloom. A year later, a similar painting by Mondrian was entitled Composition No. II. In 1915, Kazimir Malevich painted a black square on a white background. These pictures no longer depict anything representational and are literally painting without content or Concrete Art, a term that was defined programmatically in 1930. Consequently, this led to the first monochrome paintings (Untitled Blue Monochrome 1957) by Yves Klein and, in 1958, to his performance Le Vide, which attracted 3,000 visitors to view the empty white walls of the gallery rooms. It was the end of a development from content to empty vessels in art. In 1960, Yves Klein then filled the empty white canvas with casts of naked women painted blue. As we know, art began 300,000 years ago with the painting of the naked body. Naked skin is an ideal empty vessel for artistic content.

According to Lao Tse, the non-existence of clothes (or, in the past, fur) allows the skin to be used for artistic content:

Thirty spokes meet a hub; According to their non-being is the chariot's use.

One softens clay to make a vessel; according to its non-being is the vessel's use.

One breaks out a door and window; according to their non-being is the use of the house.

Therefore: Being causes benefit, non-being causes usage.

## NATURE AND ART, SELF-PORTRAIT - with assistance from Sonja

With my picture of nature and art, I first had the problem of where I would find a natural person, and I came to the conclusion that I am probably the most natural in my circle of acquaintances. I haven't cut my hair since my last military service, my beard has been growing unhindered for more than 15 years, my nails are considered unkempt, I don't use cosmetics or shower gel (with the exception of hair shampoo), I only wear glasses for reading and writing, I only wear clothes because and when I absolutely have to and I only buy new ones when the old ones are worn out. I rarely go to the doctor, take practically no medication and have had three operations in 70 years, a tonsillectomy and a hernia operation, during which my appendix was removed "somewhat fashionably", and a meniscus operation. I am aware that my behaviour could be the cause of an economic crisis if everyone were to adapt to this attitude in one fell swoop.

As a contrast to nature, I have chosen an object that I designed in the 1970s. It is a nasobem, this poetic creature of art that was born from Christian Morgenstern's lyre.

Harald Stümpke has written a scientific work on this animal genus.

Harald Stümpke, Bau und Leben der Rhinogradentia, Gustav Fischer Verlag 1967

In "Umgang mit Kunst", Georg Schmidt described the tension between naturalistic and anti-naturalistic (or abstracting) representation very well and in a differentiated way, as well as the tension between realistic representations (of the world as it is) and idealistic representations (of the world as it should be). There are four possibilities: Realistic naturalism (Leonardo da Vinci's anatomical sketches), realistic abstraction (Picasso's Guernica), idealistic abstraction (Romanesque capital of the Dream of the Three Kings at Autun) and idealistic naturalism, which recurs in waves (Hellenism - Nike of Samothrace, or 19th century history painting - Liberty, Delacroix).

If we apply Georg Schmidt's theory to the design of human beings, very interesting aspects emerge: Idealistic abstract body paintings from the Palaeolithic period to the present day. Realistic abstract prostheses (e.g. for lost limbs). Realistic naturalistic prostheses in reconstructive surgery (e.g. eye lens). We are currently experiencing a cultural peak in the field of idealistic naturalism. The ideal of youth is celebrated at every age as naturalistically as possible in the design of the human body. It becomes truly absurd when a growing number of children throughout Europe turn to anti-ageing products. Georg Schmidt also calls idealistic naturalism a *contradictio in adjectu* (contradiction in terms). Appearing eternally young in a natural way simply doesn't work.

### The inspiration for the seven pictures was provided by:

Standing Girl, ca. 1908-1909, Minneapolis Institute of Arts / CIS-STANDING-GIRL and TRANS-STANDING-GIRL  
SITTING WOMAN WITH LEGS DRAWN UP, 1917, National Gallery Prague / SITTING WOMAN WITH LEGS DRAWN UP  
Self-Portrait 1912, Collection of Vienna Museum / NATURE & ART  
Seated nude girl with shirt over her head, 1010, Albertina / NUDE GIRL WITH A SHIRT OVER HER HEAD  
Girl with red garters, 1913, private collection / GIRL WITH RED GARTERS  
Child with nimbus in a meadow of flowers, ca. 1909, Albertina / VESSEL AND CONTENT

Design for the exhibition in the Photobastei on the 8 metre long wall:

