Cis and Trans

(Text accompanying the images at CONTEMPORARY VENICE - 13TH EDITION, Venice | 15 December 2023 - 05 January 2024)

Cis

"Cis" means this side. It is the place I know, where I am and where I stand. The "Cis" picture shows what is probably Egon Schiele's most famous picture, entitled "Standing Girl". Schiele's picture is a charcoal drawing, a well-known technique, and it shows Gerti, Schiele's sister. The painting "Cis" by Fru is a photograph of a young woman named Emily. However, the photograph looks like a painting and therefore also claims to be based on reality. Although we know that photographs have always and especially today rarely depicted reality better than painting, it is considered proof of reality. The picture "Cis" also shows a reality: the reality of the painting on the paper dress and Emily's body painting. Admittedly, this is some-what difficult to understand. That's why the video shows the creation process. "Trans" is always beyond, on the other, opposite side.

In her book about Egon Schiele, Jane Kallir describes his uncompromising honesty in his depiction of female sexuality, which is still disturbing and shocking after a hundred years. From today's honest perspective, we must recognize that sexuality and gender identities each exist on a fluid spectrum beyond the binary.

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

See the working process at https://www.youtube.com/@fru-ch

Trans

"Trans" means beyond, on that side. It is the unknown place, away from me. The "Trans" picture shows Emily as a trans woman, in a transitional stage from man to woman. The picture is a photograph, but the photograph looks like a painting. On the opposite side, you can see in the video how the painting on Emily's body becomes a photograph in one transition and then becomes a painting again in another transition. Of course, "trans" is only the other side as long as I'm not there. When I'm on the other side, "trans" is no longer "trans", but "cis". However, most of the time a persistent memory of "cis" tells me that I am now, where "trans" used to be. In the absence of this memory, it is quite natural that I am always on "this side", wherever I am. Then things around me are never different, but simply always the way they are.

Human beings are driven by an irresistible desire to change their outward appearance. There is no other living being that attaches the same importance to its external appearance. With the help of clothing, hairstyle, deformation, tattooing and painting, people completely reshape the appearance given to them by nature and change it again and again within a lifetime. Their will to create is therefore first and foremost shown on themselves. Human beings thus become a work of art in the true sense of the word, either wholly or partly their own, that of another person, a group or that of society.

In this sense, "Trans" shows the transition from a natural stage in the here and now to a stage beyond, a stage of art.

Cis & Trans, Standing Girl — Hommage to Egon Schiele fru.ch / www.fru.ch
Bodypainting Photography on canvas 2023, signed by artist



