

Christiane von Wahlert

## Exhibition at the Protestant Academy in Arnoldshain

11.11.1992-28.02.1993

Dear Angelika Beck

Dear participants of the HLZ seminar,

Ladies and gentlemen

The paintings of Angelika Beck, between which you are now standing and I unfortunately am not, are for me, I say it quite frankly, a blast. Strong colors, clear contours, rhythmic division of the picture surface, decisive selection of the picture sections determine her oil and Tempara pictures. Her themes are no less decisive: the presence of the female and the choreography of the sexes, along with bulls and cows, babies' bottoms - and a little further away - the mountain world.

In the U.S., there is a group of dedicated female artists - they call themselves Gorilla Girls - who use witty and spectacular public actions to draw attention to the difficult and disadvantaged position of women in the international art world. One of their ad campaigns in major daily newspapers reads: "Do women haven to be naked to get into the museum?" - an allusion to the centuries-old tradition of European nude painting, in which naked women were the most popular subject, but without being recognized as artistic subjects in their own right.

The female nudity in the pictures of Angelika Beck fulfills the charm of a sovereign doubling: the look at the woman is at the same time the look of the woman. Her nudity seems self-evident and full of potency, surrendered to the gaze in calm concentration, without that devotion that signals abandonment.

Next to them, the magnificently gathered dresses in blue, yellow, black and red seem like just abandoned skins, standing in front of themselves in cheerful elegance.

If man and woman appear together in a picture, they wear the clothes on their bodies. The choreography of this most difficult of relationships becomes visible in the tail of their gazes. Man and woman do not look at each other. To stage relationships between people, their closeness and distance to each other through this "tail of the gaze" is an art that film has brought to a perfection like no other medium. It is therefore fitting that Angelika Beck views films with great analytical acuity. Films consist of visible images on the screen or monitor - and invisible images that no director has ever produced. They only exist in our heads, they come into being all by themselves, and they are essential to the effect of a film.



*1988 Pair 75 x 90cm oil on canvas*

Immediately in front of you hangs the picture "Man and woman sitting opposite each other at a table". She wears a red dress with a V-neck at the back, he wears a gray jacket, between them a white tablecloth, the indeterminate background kept in dark tint blue.

Man and woman sit opposite each other, looking past each other. Their worlds are not separated by a vertical line - as in the case of the couple in the train "Brave New World". The two here are set rather obliquely to each other, interlocked at a distance, the diagonal determines the composition, the zigzag of the triangle gives the form - so from the eyebrows of the man to the cigarette at the edge of the picture. Thus the zigzag of the triangle shapes, even when there are only two people in the room. We get to see the melancholically absent look of the man, the look of the woman - cinematically speaking the counter-shot - that only exists in our head.

Painterly the picture has wonderful qualities. The woman's exposed neck and the man's white shirt shimmer in the light. Beck succeeds in holding strongly spatially conceived constellations in a floating balance, as it were, in the surface - nothing pops out of the picture, nothing tips away to the back.

As I said, from a painterly point of view, because from the point of view of semantics, a lot of things jump out of the pictures at the viewers. For example, in the startling painting "Man, Dog, Woman" just around the corner.



*1984, Man, dog woman 155 x 140 cm, pigments and dispersion on canvas*

A man sits indeterminately.

And held in soft colors at the table. The woman, turned away from the man, stands firmly on the floor with her knees pressed through, a gesture of travesty and phallic self-assertion.

The wraparound alphabet at the end of the aisle puts a piece of millionfold everyday experience into the picture through the eyes of a woman. At the same time, it ironizes a perspective that runs through the history of male painting like a red thread: the desire to catch a glimpse of the delta of Venus, the secret place of woman as Albrecht Dürer revealed it most clearly in his engraving "The Draughtsman of the Reclining Woman".

The suction painting also reverses the perspective. Mary with the Child Jesus is, as it were, a permanent icon of Western painting, always held in a top view. Now Mary paints herself, her point of view determines the picture. That is good. It should go on like this.

I hear Kaspar König has sent a card that he cannot come. So I am in good company with my absence.

I wish all those present a pleasant evening, the pictures a lot of attention, Angelika Beck much success - and remotely declare the exhibition open.