

# Nairy Baghramian and Jan Timme

14 December 2007 – 24 February 2008

*"Everlasting layers of ideas, images, feelings, have fallen upon your brain softly as light. Each succession has seemed to bury all that went before. And yet, in reality, not one has been extinguished."<sup>1</sup>*

The artists Nairy Baghramian and Jan Timme have produced a joint exhibition for the Kunstverein Nürnberg - Albrecht Dürer Gesellschaft that responds to the specific layout of its rooms, and allows a connection between the interior and exterior space. Works were collated and developed for the exhibition, which poetically place the processes of perception at the heart of the proceedings, imply memories and resonances of culturally historical developments and phenomena, and, at the same time, analyse the habits of reception on the part of the audience.

A joint work is on show in the large room at the Kunstverein, entitled *Everlasting layers of ideas, images, feelings, have fallen upon your brain softly as light. Each succession has seemed to bury all that went before. And yet, in reality, not one has been extinguished* (2006). The title of the installation is a quotation from Thomas de Quincey's *Suspiria de Profundis*. The work, which consists of wallpaper printed with delicate papyrus stems, and a sweeping floor sculpture, makes formal modernistic references, but at the same time expounds the perception of space and time in a free and poetic manner. The rhythmical and balanced collaboration by the two artists opens one's eyes to the here and now of what is being exposed. Thematic references emerge by means of the formal arrangement, but also, for example, via the papyrus stems themselves. These serve as a reference to earlier manuscripts— rolls of papyrus — and thereby lead directly to Thomas de Quincey and his description of the palimpsest<sup>2</sup> which is about the erasing of text and, in consequence, information. With its title, the work refers to the layering and planes of perception, and how this is influenced through collective and individual memories.

Jan Timme (b. 1971 in Stuttgart, lives in Berlin) displays the illuminated wall piece *Nothing is written* (UV) (2007) in the corner room of the Kunstverein. When lit with ultraviolet light, and with the onset of darkness, the script which has been rendered in white ultra violet paint on a white wall suddenly becomes visible. Here, Timme is also referring to the processes of memory, to the way in which they fade and then reappear — in this case with the use of text. The inner meaning of this quasi- "nocturnal" text within his work enters our perception as an abstract, tautological paradox.

Similarly, the artist's photographic work, also presented here, concerns itself with the fundamental elements of perception – light and shadow. It considers the meaning of light to be a medium that reveals knowledge, i.e. the relevance determined by the concomitant shadow. A perfectly lit photograph shows a pile of books, standing upside down, all on the theme of shadows. However, the shadow, which the pile would normally cast, is missing in this picture. As a result, the pile appears to be floating.

These works chime well with Nairy Baghramian's sculptures (b. 1971 in Isfahan, Iran, lives in Berlin) that likewise present settings which both challenge and cancel out our precise way of looking. Just as in the collaboration with Jan Timme, the artist obviously works with precisely chosen materials which formally recall modernist sculpture, even though they don't completely conform to it, because they themselves address contexts and attributions with their own inherent materials which lead into other poetic or otherwise unassociated areas.

In a similar way to the floor piece, which suspends surfaces that lift up the ground like powerful but delicate flaps, simultaneously distancing themselves from it, Baghramian's work *Image as Title* (2005) extends this formal approach and weaves a further dynamic into the floor level. The work consists of a sculpture and a photograph, with both elements corresponding.

By adding the copy of a nineteenth century fashion photograph, depicting two women with bonnets and aprons striking a pose, gender specific imputations and questions are opened up, with regard to the way the depiction of the women, that is to say the objects, is received.

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas de Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater and other Writings* (London, 2003), p. 151.

<sup>2</sup>From the Greek *παλιν* + *ψαω* = *palin* "again" + *psao* "I scrape", meaning "scraped (clean and used) again". A papyrus manuscript, where the original writing has been erased and replaced by a more recent text, as an early form of recycling this valuable material. By use of technical processes, earlier layers can be rendered visible once more.

Similarly, *Schatulle* ("Casket") (2004) leaves itself open to many different ways of looking. The memory of a familiar object with sacred connotations, a white, varnished, architectural picture, like a folded box, is mirrored in the fold-like shape of an opening, which provides a momentary glimpse into the concealed space, as if it were the arbitrary blink of an eye. At the same time, it is arranged as an obvious dialogue with the viewer and his or her expectations. These connotations contrast with the chosen materials – lacquered metal, Plexiglas cubes, rope – so that it, in a decidedly absurd manner, manifests itself as an art object. Such strands of reflection, which draw the observer into the work's dynamic field, can be woven still further, almost as though the opening of the object itself is a metaphor for this process.

With cordial support:

Bayerisches Staatsministerium für  
Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst



Kulturstiftung der  
Sparkasse Nürnberg  
für die Stadt Nürnberg



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