

The elementary force of art

The 1986 deceased postman, actor and artist Heinz Braun would be right now 75 years old. His friends from Ratisbona are remembering him with an impressive and substantial exhibition.

Sometimes its just incredible how powerful paintings are, how much energy they radiate. At the moment the “Kunst- und Gewerbeverein” in Ratisbona shows 140 of those powerful and energetic paintings, drawings and aquarelles by the 1986 deceased postman, actor and autodidactic artist Heinz Braun. A brilliant show, for a man that resembles a force of nature, at least that is what you hear the most listening to the narratives of his old companions. His personality has a lasting effect, the mix between impulsive, sensitive, caressing and sometimes surprisingly stoutly motivated his friends to gave him the nickname “Pluto”. It all seems reasonable, especially when recalling the outstanding performances combined with the imposing physique of Heinz Braun in the films of his friend and director Herbert Achternbusch.

The intense feeling of being torn derives from being a postman and being a passionate artist at the same time.

Born 1938 in Munich, Heinz Braun grew up in impoverished circumstances. His mother was a seamstress and his father never returned from the battlefield in World War II. Only by relocating to Bad Abbach, a city south of Ratisbona and the hometown of his mother, they were able to survive the last 2 years of war. Shortly after returning to Munich he entered the civil service as a Postman, where the maternal safety culture mainly figured into his choice. After his early retirement dued to a sportive injury, Heinz Braun was about to give his famous refractory quotation to an journalist: “Being idiot before being official.” The existentially inner strife, which probably tortured him during his lifetime but also made him conquer new frontiers, is easily to read off here.

The year 1972 and his visit of the documenta 5 in Kassel may have been such a departure to new frontiers. Klaus Caspers, an old friend and the initiator of the actual exhibition in Ratisbona, accompanied Heinz Braun back in 1972 and tells us about Brauns excitement about the works of photorealistic artists. He began to nurture his artistic talent, probably inherited from his deceased father, for example by copying the front pages of a well-known german paper with a pencil in a meticulously way. About the same time Braun was a habitué in the “Alte Pinakothek”(Munich), where he copied several Old Masters and studied they techniques. Still delivering letters and parcels in Germering, near Munich his inner strife gradually increased. He was attracted to art, but still confined to his tedious and unloved bread-and-butter-job, he met Herbert Achternbusch, a autodidactically director, who already achieved some successes. From regularly meetings at a pub evolved a fruitful artistic collaboration between the two men.

Braun took the lead in Achternbusch's films and swiftly enjoyed cult status in the 70ties bohemian scene. But the one and only dream – being an artist and living off – was back then not viable, most notably aggravated was the missing of an academic degree. Even the impressive diligence and the mounting exasperation didn't change a thing. Ostensibly he started painting the parcels he had to deliver. This behavioral disorder and the sporting injury in combination led to the early retirement 1979, his chance to jump right off.

Klaus Caspers remembers some loutish behavior from a lit and jealous Herbert Achternbusch at the first exhibition , the artistic coming-out of Heinz Braun in Germering. Caspers just grabbed the rioting Achternbusch, dressed in a white suite and nudged him in a dirty puddle. Hearing that story explains the intense and impressive exhibition in Ratisbona. Caspers used the imaginary 75th

birthday of Heinz Braun, who was buried in oblivion by the art-scene, to offer this exceptional artist a platform he really deserves. A unique documentation of Braun's tragic and mesmerizing story, lived up through his paintings and sketches. The tragic therefore laid in the fact that 1982 he came face to face with the diagnosis of laryngeal cancer. The antinomy here: from that moment on Braun followed his passion with a striking vitality. He was literally able to bring life into his paintings. Whether he created landscapes on a panel with mud and clay, whether he portrayed good friends with brutal honesty, which one he also needed to mentally fight the cancer in his innumerable self-portraits. His art is a roller coaster ride between the depths of despair and the lust for life beyond despair.

“The idyll is only a sleeve”, a depiction on one of his paintings. The exhibition is a purgatory, that cast a spell over you and doesn't relinquish for a long time.