



An ART HISTORICAL EXPERTISE

by art historian Mag. Gabriela Szafarska



Gabriela Szafarska, is an outstanding art historian. She completed her master's degree in art history at the famous University of Warsaw with distinction. She gained her experience on the art market in renowned German and European art houses and galleries. After the fateful encounter with the artists Iven Orx and Aaron Vinn, she devotes her energy to them with great passion. In her eyes, with their bravura artworks, they make a valuable contribution to contemporary art.

DIVINE GUYS, DIVINE ART

AND ITS TRANS-AVANT-GARDE MYSTICISM

The world-famous writer and literary scholar Vladimir Nabokov used to say: "Art is a divine game, since the artist, while creating it, approaches God directly as a true creator."

Iven Orx & Aaron Vinn are a Cologne-based artist duo who are creators of their own transcendental reality. Since 2005 they have been working together in their studio in Cologne, creating paintings, sculptures and art installations. In doing so, they try to "bring a piece of heaven to earth" every day. Their artistic path has undergone many transformations, but has always remained a process aimed at revealing a piece of mysticism.

THE EXPRESSIONIST PAINTINGS

Herbert Kühn wrote 1919, in connection with expressionism: "In expressionism, the represented and the object fall far apart. The represented begins behind the painting. The work no longer contemplates external reality, but proposes another reality, that of the artist."

In the book 'The Hero in a Thousand Forms', Joseph Campbell describes that challenges in life always come to us when we are ready for them. It was at such that moment when Iven Orx and Aaron Vinn first met. Both artists are deeply rooted in expressionism, they share a similar aesthetic sensibility, way of



representing realities and work ethos.

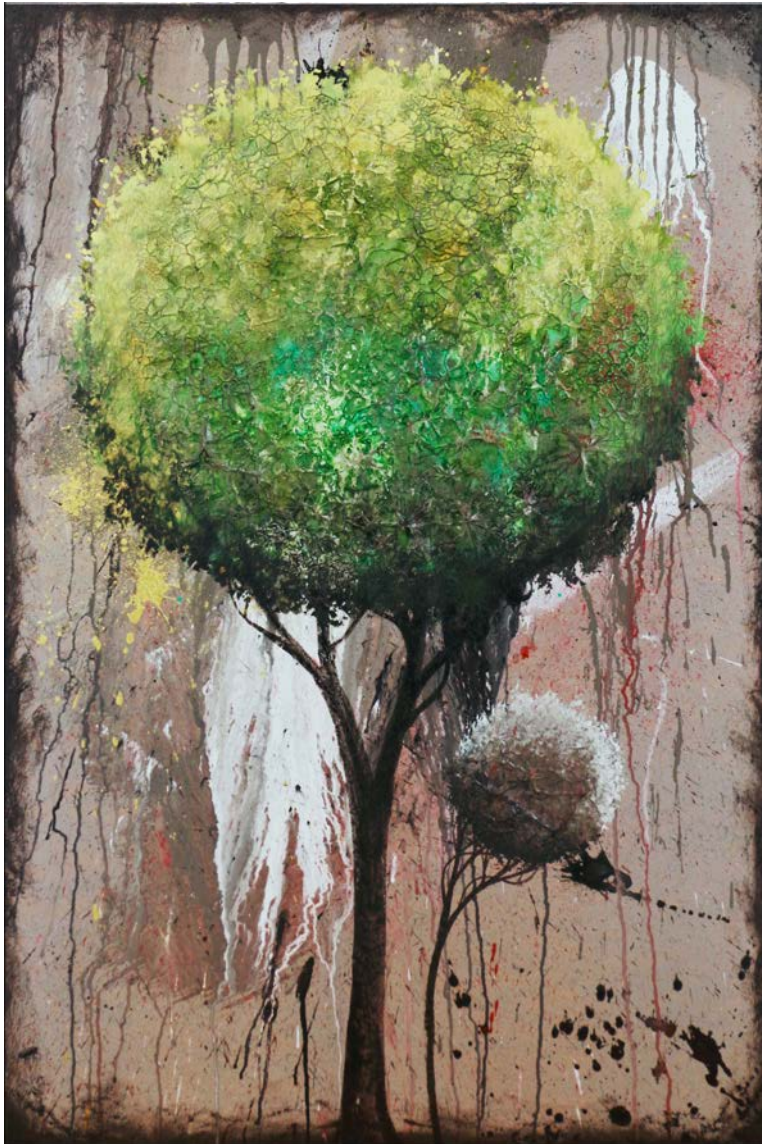
Arts and energy have much in common, moreover, both are eternal. The energy that an artist manifests and captures in his or her work is transmitted to the viewer and indexes innumerable interpretations and meanings in him or her. This phenomenon can be named in different ways, for example Marshall McLuhan uses the term “electricity”, an element that generates strong aesthetic sensations in the viewer. For him, it is equivalent to the energy of language. This aforementioned “electricity of expression” is the fascinating and hypnotically captivating

element that distinguishes the Expressionist works of Iven Orx and Aaron Vinn and makes them special in today's art market.

Contemporary art has re-evaluated the language of form. Accordingly, one can talk about a deconstruction of the artwork in the classical sense. Jacques Derrida wrote that "there is nothing outside the text itself", by paraphrasing we can conclude that likewise "there is nothing else but the work of art itself." Iven Orx and Aaron Vinn go beyond the framing convention, their artworks are not about the search for a single discourse. For them, the artwork itself is the form that represents the only true reality. A reality that reflects positive experiences, pleasure and generally the affirmation of life.

For the artist duo, the creative process is as important as the result itself. Their art is made with focus on every detail, sometimes they even appear more "as written" than painted, which makes them unique and one-of-a-kind. The purity of light, the affirmation of colour, surreal representations of reality as well as purist compositions of pure form, are to be perceived. All these elements combine to generate a new language that is characteristic of 'Neue Wilde'. Iven Orx and Aaron Vinn reduce the figurative elements to a minimum and interweave it with Gerhard Richter's monochromatic understanding of colour. In this way, they want to create an ideal, a pure and perfect work of art that is untainted and unencumbered by art movements, trends or theories. Their way of thinking and the interpretation of their art are part of the Transavantgarde. It is characterised by an emotional expression, as well as an intuitive transference of form into a stylistic or formal connection, which in combination reinforces the emotional means of expression.

Iven Orx and Aaron Vinn are constantly exploring new and unexpected fields to expand their horizons of both formal and thematic abilities. They tirelessly sound out their own synthesis of possibilities. Thanks to the artists, new paths open up for us



to request and to recreate our own meaning.

Herwarth Walden, the founder of the magazine "Der Sturm", wrote in 1927: "...the painter presents what he sees in the deepest layers of his consciousness. He expresses himself, the fading reality is merely a symbol for him. He engages in the process of his own self, the outside world carries records into his consciousness, he again brings them to the outside for expression."

Thus, the art of Iven Orx and Aaron Vinn impresses with an extraordinary form and complexity that allows each of us to generate our own meanings.

THE DIVINE ART

The divine has its own genesis at Iven Orx and Aaron Vinn.

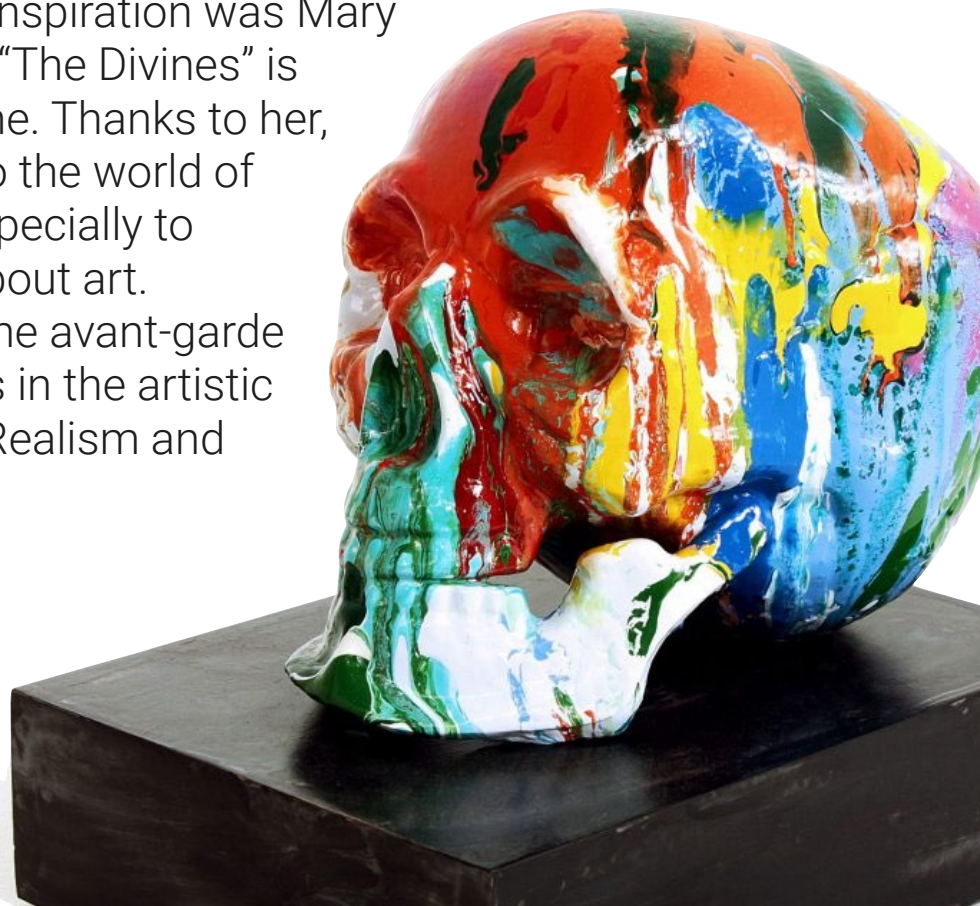
Cologne, a city associated with pilgrimages among other things, is a major influence. Because of its large number of sacred objects (buildings, monuments, works of art and relics) the city is a synonym for gold and splendour. It amazes and astonishes at

the same time, it has kept its mystical face for centuries. The relics of the Three Kings were brought here from Vercelli (near Milan). Thus Cologne, like Cologne Cathedral, has attracted pilgrims from all over the world from the Middle Ages to the present day.

The skull often appears in the art of “The Divine”. For them, it is an important symbol of the boundary between what is human and what is divine, between this world and the hereafter. In Christianity, the skull is the attribute of the saints, as well as the essence of the biblical book of Ecclesiastes by Solomon: “Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas” (Vanity of the vanities, everything is vanity). The vanitas motif of the skull has been traditionally used for millennia in literature, visual art, theatre and music to symbolise the beauty, decay and transience of everything earthly.

Iven Orx & Aaron Vinn explore and exaggerate the mystical, almost sacred tradition of medieval art. It was one of the factors that shaped their art, but not the only one. They also met many inspiring personalities along the way.

One of their first great inspiration was Mary Bauermeister, who like “The Divines” is associated with Cologne. Thanks to her, they were introduced to the world of the avant-garde and especially to avant-garde thinking about art. Bauermeister formed the avant-garde of the 1960s, as well as in the artistic circle of Pop Art, New Realism and Fluxus.





She was also closely associated with Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Niki de Saint Phall and Jean Tinguely. Her unsurpassable role model, however, was Marcel Duchamp throughout her life.

For “The Divines”, the encounter with Bauermeister was a decisive turning point. With her they traversed the artistic path of the Avantgarde and in the process they created their own Transavantgarde, by breaking what they regarded as the dusty dogmas of art. In ihrer Kunst waren die Veränderungsprozesse dynamisch und ihr Pfad immer darauf ausgerichtet das Unerreichbare zu erreichen und das Unberührbare zu berühren.

Indeed, “transformation” is the key word for them. Transformare (Latin for transformation) means transformation, deformation, transmutation and is a synonym for change and movement. In

their art, the processes of change were dynamic and their path always aimed at reaching the unattainable and touching the untouchable.

“The Divines” underwent their own transformations, so that the thematic diversity of their artworks knows no bounds. Their spectrum includes historical and occult, religious as well as completely surrealistic as well as fantastic or even futuristic visions of universal themes. Often the forms of representation are reminiscent of those of the ancient gods of the Romans, Egyptians and Mayans or those of Catholic saints.

Bauermeister implanted in “The Divines” the need to rethink aspects of their sense of art and awakened their interest in the art of Duchamp. It was precisely he who rejected the visual appeal reserved only for high art. In “Idea ready made” or “objet trouvé”, an art object or its part is created from everyday objects. The aim here is to transfer the meaning from the object to the subject.

This process is perfectly understandable by “The Divines”. They want to give their works a mystical meaning from then on, by taking them out of their previous meanings to which everyone is accustomed. We see the application of this in their subsequent works, in which they elevate their paintings and objects, as well as pre-existing objects, to the status of the ideal (the divine). The surfaces of the artworks are now sometimes enhanced with gold, silver, platinum, glitter and many other materials to expand them and thus elevate them to the symbolic element for “heaven on earth”. “The Divines” thus not only approach traditional art in a mystical way, they also play with its old order.

In analysing their art, it is hard to avoid the analogy with Susan Sontag’s mid-1960s essay, “Notes on Camp”. Sontag defines camp as “a failed, disappointed earnestness”. She lets the air out of a balloon inflated with patos of serious art, which has as its

mission: docere, movere, delectare (to teach – to persuade – to convince). One of her most important views on this, she rejects the categorisation of seeing something as “good” or “bad”. Camp is sometimes oversaturated, kitschy and exaggerated in its expression, but it is certainly a kind of sensibility in art. Therefore, the “camp art” of Iven Orx & Aaron Vinn is the acceptance and affirmation of any form that escapes their classical understanding.



THE TRANSAVANGARDE

The term “Transavangarde” also Italian “Transavanguardia” (beyond the avant-garde) was first mentioned in 1979 by the Roman art critic Achille Bonito Oliva and has mainly emerged from Italian Arte Povera.

The art of Iven Orx and Aaron Vinn fits the definition of the transavangarde, mainly by rejecting the imperative of novelty. Past themes, motifs and ways of making art are reclaimed with ironic detachment, making it difficult to distinguish what it is, a joke or a serious statement, beauty or kitsch. The transavantgarde also means the use of art in its traditional mind, namely the combination of different styles and techniques.

In times when art is supposed to have already said the last word and form as well as content seems to be completely exhausted, the artists want the viewer to take part in the infinite creative process of meanings. For "The Divines", this actual creative process itself is extremely significant, as the resulting art is for them their way of communication between the artist and the viewer. It has the task of creating the missing transcendental element between what is divine and what is earthly.



Without a doubt, Iven Orx & Aaron Vinn are the answer to the emotional and aesthetic needs of today's art consumer.

Their work effectively fills the gap between the often utopian assumptions of contemporary artists and the current prevailing aesthetic. They belong to the new generation that has to deal with a viewer who has already been confronted with a multitude of daily implied images.

Nevertheless, their way of working remains “transavantgardistic”, filled with an unusual form that allows each of us to generate our own meanings. Thus, they contribute to the transavantgarde way of thinking about art and are characterised by an emotive expression as well as an intuitive form of representation. In doing so, they consciously use various art forms that are intended to serve emotional transmission.

The Divines say of themselves that their role is to “bring a piece of heaven to earth” and therefore they imbue each of their works with a divine soul of transcendental, supernatural mysticism.

They see their profession as a kind of mission. Each of their artworks is supposed to possess qualities to transform our reality into a supernatural state. Their lives are determined by the daily search for transavantgarde mysticism.

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