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Klaus Mosettig's Withdrawal

"Man is not free to choose whether to be or not to be. A mental effort, consubstantial with his history and which will cease only with his disappearance from the stage of the universe, compels him to accept the two self-evident and contradictory truths which, through their clash, set his thought in motion, and, to neutralize their opposition, generate an unlimited series of other binary distinctions which, while never resolving the primary contradiction, echo and perpetuate it on an ever smaller scale: […]"
Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1971

Homage to the Square to the Square

No matter how you look at it, a fundamental difficulty in the description of these pictures still exists – a difficulty slightly reminiscent of the classical chicken-and-egg dilemma: The question is whether the picture format defines the composition of the picture field or, vice versa, the composition of the picture field defines the format. Both correlate so directly in form that a preference for one or the other seems arbitrary. In any case, it isn't wrong to claim that the composition would always be based on a square that was scaled down in the picture field in four, sometimes only three precisely measured steps, or – if one decides to go for the contrary description – on a square that was scaled up from the centre of the picture field in just as many and just as precise steps. In the first case, each smaller square appears to be superimposed on a respective larger one: only the innermost and smallest one remains fully visible. In the other case, each square is framed by the next larger one until the process comes to a halt in the picture's square frame.

Regardless of varying format sizes and the actual number of reproduced squares, every single picture of this series therefore negotiates the geometrically precise division of its picture field. And in the end, it makes no difference which square is granted priority – the outermost (the chicken?) or the innermost (the egg?) – because with respect to proportions both will always have already been related to each other so accurately that one can be derived from the other. Seen this way, the series appears as a closed, self-contained system that turns its back on the world.

However, if a further component that is essential to the composition is taken into account, this point of view needs to be qualified: the squares nesting in one another are not arranged concentrically, in other words, they have no common centre; instead, the centre of each square shifts downwards along the vertical axis of the image, or upwards when described the opposite way. Although also this process takes place in precisely measured steps,[1] it causes an irritating misalignment in the picture field and this impression only fades when the composition is no longer regarded as two-dimensional, but as a spatial arrangement that has its origin no longer within the picture, but outside of it, namely, in the spectator's eye.

[1] The interval that defines the shift of each square's centre is equivalent to the dimension of each square's decrease in size. Except for the outermost square that is centred on the image support and thus shows a consistent distance towards all its four sides, all other squares relate off-centred to one another: the distance from the side edges of each larger square is twice, towards the top three times as large as the distance from the bottom end.

What so far had been regarded as a decrease, respectively blow-up, of the squares in the plane can now also be understood as a virtual receding into the picture space's depth. In this case, the perspective lines are activated which in the picture itself remained inarticulate though they could easily be established by connecting the corners of the squares in order to reveal a vanishing point shared by all squares and thus open up a space organised by perspective. Then, the innermost square is not necessarily the smallest of all squares depicted but rather (only) the seemingly furthest away from the spectator's eye; it forms the rear end, so to speak, the back (wall) of a virtual space that resembles an empty stage.

So far, the sole issue has been to clarify the basic geometric scheme that really lives up to the series' title: *Homage to the Square*. However, one basic fact has not yet been mentioned because that which makes the geometric pattern visible at all remained concealed: colour. In the following, we will deal with this volatile phenomenon only marginally because our description is not dedicated to Josef Albers' famous series of the same name in which for more than twenty years (from around 1950 until his death

in 1976) and in hundreds of paintings he explored the effects and interaction of colour;[2] the description at hand focuses on a serial work by Klaus Mosettig that refers to Albers' *Homages* and is titled *Withdrawal*.

[2] See: *Josef Albers. Bilder und "Interaction of Color"* (published on the occasion of the exhibition at Kunstverein München, 13.3.–19.4.1970), Munich 1970; Eugen Gomringer: *Josef Albers. Sein Werk als Beitrag zur visuellen Gestaltung im 20. Jahrhundert*, Starnberg 1971; Gottfried Boehm: "Die Dialektik der ästhetischen Grenze: Überlegungen zur gegenwärtigen Ästhetik im Anschluss an Josef Albers", in: *Neue Hefte für Philosophie*, No. 5, 1973, pp. 118–138; Exhib. cat. *Josef Albers. Minimal Means, Maximum Effect* (published on the occasion of the exhibition at Fundación Juan March, 28.3.–6.6.2004), Madrid 2005.

This series, however, does entirely without colour. Mosettig certainly adopts Albers' composition for his pictures, but unlike Albers, who applied oil paint onto white-primed masonite panels with a palette knife, he draws on paper using different grades of pencils. He, in a way, filters the light from Albers' colour studies by translating their colour values to pure tonal values. This procedure which will be explained in more detail below generates a range of shady doubles, or, considering their pale, almost hovering character, one might say, revenants. For without colour, they seem to be depleted of their lifeblood. But what is the meaning of this ghostly apparition?

In Albers' paintings, colour is the actual agent of the pictorial narrative and plays the lead role on the so precisely measured and only supposedly empty stage. Strictly speaking, the description given above therefore does *not* apply to Albers' pictures: the calculations that underlie the composition are indeed implicit measures against which the interplay of colours unfolds, but when viewed, they disappear from sight and to a great extent from awareness. The colours, however, (usually applied pure and straight from customary paint tubes) with which Albers established, picture by picture, ever new relationships to explore their interactions,[3] make an impact.

[3] On Albers' technique see: Jeannette Redensek: "On Josef Albers' Painting Materials and Techniques", in: *Minimal Means, Maximum Effect*, (see note 2), pp. 21–40; and ibid.: Elaine de Kooning: "Albers Paints a Picture." (1950), pp. 322–326.

The obtained effects are too diverse and numerous to list here. Albers himself tried to systematise them in his book *Interaction of Color,* where they are vividly represented in a series of lessons.[4]

[4] Josef Albers: *Interaction of Color*, New Haven 1963.

The following observations are significant for us as they are comprehensible even in Mosettig's colourless versions: Depending on the colour scheme, the chromatic boundary (which at the same time is the shape boundary) is perceived once as an abrupt change, then as a smooth transition causing one to focus either on the borders or on the colour fields themselves. Especially the fluent progressions often show overlay effects: one has the impression that one square is lying on top of another although the picture is, *per material*, a flat surface. Sometimes, there is an effect of transparency as if the colour of one square framing another one shone through the colour of the smaller square. In general, it can be noted that the interaction of colours counteracts the composition's flatness which becomes manifest in the back and forth of single colours – evidence of an indeed only virtual spatiality that occasionally can even reverse the perspective construction to make it come towards us in the shape of a (fortunately) truncated pyramid.[5]

[5] According to Albers, human perception transforms the "factual facts" of the image to always in principle "actual facts", which causes a difference between the actual image and its appearance. However, in both cases Albers speaks of "facts", of actualities or verities, so one cannot regard one thing as more objective or truer than the other. See: Josef Albers: "One plus One Equals Three and More: Factual Facts and Actual Facts", in: *Search Versus Re-Search. Three Lectures by Josef Albers at Trinity College* (1965), Hartford 1969.

And, insofar as also the colouration makes the pictures appear more spacious and airy from inside to outside and from bottom to top, they literally seem to breathe.[6]

[6] In one of his prose poems the artist speaks about his paintings as "[…] breathing and pulsating – from within", in: *Minimal Means, Maximum Effect*, (see note 2), p. 279. It is not without reason that when one looks at Albers' pictures one often feels reminded of landscapes that with low-lying horizons grant the sky a lot of

space; among Albers' picture titles one finds many that acknowledge this connection to nature: *Early Blooming*, *After Dusk*, *Far in Far*, etc.

Thus, Albers paid homage less to the square and more to colour, but above all, he paid homage to the all-pervading light. The artist always seems to have imagined the picture as a kind of window through which light enters and illuminates an interior.[7]

[7] On this aspect see: Margit Rowell: "On Albers' Color", in: *Artforum*, Vol. X, No. 5, 1972, pp. 26–37.

Ever since studying at the Bauhaus, where after only two semesters he became a teacher and founded the Master Class for glass painting over which he presided until the school's definitive closure (in 1933) and his emigration to the United States, he had been working with glass – with this material's transparency, semi-transparency and opacity. Not only did he at that time produce numerous stained-glass paintings which consistently appeared in front of windows in contemporary photographs, he also furnished residential houses with coloured windows and developed a special sandblasting technique with which he achieved chromatic effects on glass surfaces. His engagement with glass continued in the U.S.A., where he went on using it as an image carrier and also occasionally designed windows; the window above all (for instance, in the series *Variant/Adobe*, 1947–50) is a recurring motif in those "autonomous" pictures, prints and paintings which form the main body of his artistic oeuvre. One could, of course, also describe his *Homages* as windows which may be less suited for looking out of than for being seen through (Albers: "The picture is looking at you.")[8] In any case, at times, their painted surfaces seem to be like translucent membranes so that singular colour fields appear as if against the light and develop a vibrancy that is strikingly similar to that of coloured glass.

[8] Cited from: *Minimal Means, Maximum Effect*, (see note 2), p. 22.

Certainly, Mosettig's drawings do not have this appearance – they are confined to the representation of the factual, regardless of such effects, although some of them occur in a modified way. But in doing so, aren't Albers' paintings deprived precisely of their essence? And what, if anything, do they obtain in return? How, in fact, does an "Albers" become a "Mosettig"? How does this appropriation happen, if one can even speak of appropriation at all? Questions like these run the risk of calling the whole gamut of commonplaces of art criticism to action and may lead one to search for answers without having developed a sensorium for the specific spirit of the respective work of art, in this case, Mosettig's art. To resist such (theoretical) reductions, moreover, to raise awareness for the spirit just mentioned (or also its wit), the answers will be temporarily put on hold and instead we will reconstruct part of the approach through which Mosettig found his way to Albers.

On the spirit of apple trees

Let's begin by looking back: About ten years ago it was noted that Klaus Mosettig's art is critically related to the dichotomy between nature and culture[9] – a dichotomy that structuralism had assumed since Claude Lévi-Strauss and to which structuralism, up to Michel Serres, constantly questioning and complicating this dichotomy, had returned time and again.

[9] Thomas Trummer: "Exclusion against Exclusion. Klaus Mosettig and the supposed duality of nature and culture", in: *Die Übergänge sind beim leidenschaftlichen Gleichgewicht, was die Dübel und Verzapfungen bei einem Fachwerk sind*, published by Gesellschaft der Freunde der Neuen Galerie Graz (published on the occasion of the exhibition *Holzplastik* at Neue Galerie Graz, 22.4.–5.6.2006), Graz 2006, pp. 54–61.

As correct as Thomas Trummer's remark may be, it instantly calls up the question of what could possibly motivate and qualify an artist to get involved with issues of this magnitude. The answer can be found in a work of art that in the first decade of this century probably preoccupied Mosettig more than any other. In its core, it concerns a couple of apple trees that the artist cultivated. For these trees – which were given their varieties' names like "Jonagold", "Pinova" and "Cherry Cox" and were grown in plant pots making them fit for exhibition – Mosettig built mobile racks that serve both as vehicles and as modelling structures. The racks are made of a base plate with wheels on which

the trees can be placed and a metal frame that allows them to be stabilised and to bend certain branches in different directions. Considered in themselves, these racks make one think of examples from the realm of constructivist sculpture; at the same time we believe that we have found a (parodistic?) allusion to the sculptural vehicles of Bruno Gironcoli, Mosettig's teacher. In any case, the metal racks can be classified as sculptural works or, more specifically, as works of abstract sculpture. Despite their abstraction, they remain related to the old and almost forgotten idea that art is primarily an imitation of nature, and that this mimesis essentially implicates a factor of embellishment or spiritualisation. For the pale grey-painted racks that themselves feature an arborescent structure have the main function of shaping a tree or a pair of trees – a piece of organic nature – according to the artist's intention. Numerous grafting attempts on the trees show to what extent Mosettig got involved with these ideas and the associated classical art theory. Not one tree was left in its primordial state, each was shaped and subjected to several graftings, shield budding and splice grafting treatments with scions from other varieties.[10]

[10] On this cultural technique see: Uwe Wirth (ed.): *Pfropfen, Impfen, Transplantieren*, Berlin 2011.

Provided that the applied method is combinatorial and that it suggests sexual interpretation, it may be reminiscent of certain examples of (Post-)Minimalism – just think of Bruce Nauman's inflexions and (re)combinations of bodies, words, and sentences. At the same time, a considerably older heirloom of classical art theory can be found here. It's hardly a coincidence that such combinatorics can be found in the thought of the social utopian Charles Fourier, from whose writings Mosettig borrowed the complicated title for his work (we will soon quote this literary graft).[11]

[11] On the combinatorial aspect of classicism see: Jean-Claude Lebensztejn: *L'art de la tâche. Introduction à la Nouvelle méthode d'Alexander Cozens*, Paris 1990; idem: *De l'imitation dans les beaux-arts*, Paris 1996.

If one is to believe Fourier, nature has always waited to be perfected by humans. "[…] nature", he wrote in one of his astounding books, "[…] conforms with us in terms of the contempt that we attest simple structures. Like us, it despises wild flowers and the fruit of the forest; it only creates them in order to align itself with our work, to embellish and perfect with the help of human labour, and to produce flowers and fruit in men's hand that are composed and not simple."[12]

[12] Charles Fourier: *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 4, *Théorie de l'Unité Universelle*, 3rd volume, Paris 1841, p. 222: "[…] la nature […] s'accorde avec nous dans le mépris que nous témoignons à l'ordre simple. Comme nous, elle dédaigne la fleur des champs et le fruit des bois; elle ne les crée que pour s'allier à notre industrie, s'embellir et se perfectionner par les travaux de l'homme, produire sous sa main des fleurs et des fruits composés et non pas simples."

The grafting process that Mosettig promoted in Fourier's spirit came down to two final conditions, one dry and one liquid. On the one hand it frequently happened that the trees didn't survive the grafting. In this case, the artist removed their bark (as if it had been mortal apparel) with the result that merely a more or less weirdly shaped piece of bright wood was left. Decease proved to be a transition to another condition, and the distinction between art (the rack or enframing, "Gestell" in Martin Heidegger's famous text on the essence of technology, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, New York, 1977) and nature (the tree) that had been this work's starting point vanished completely: Now the trees were all art and could be presented in their racks as forever immutable wooden sculptures ("Holzplastiken" as Mosettig called them). The other final condition, a liquid, is an extract that the artist obtained from the fruit of his work. The juice from various types of apple was distilled to make schnapps and filled into a bottle, and after the bottle had been sealed air tight with wax and assigned the work title *All the spirit of my art*, it, too, could be exhibited. If, according to classical conviction, the refining imitation of nature is based on ideas that have their place in the human spirit, Mosettig has exchanged this idealistic spirit for another and found a matching container for it. This other, most clear and limpid 'spirit' doesn't need human consciousness to exist – a thought that we will deal with again below.

As mentioned earlier, the title of the apple tree piece refers to a quotation by Fourier found in

a footnote in Roland Barthes' book *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*: *The transitions are for the passional balance what the dowels and mortises are to a framework*.[13]

[13] Roland Barthes: *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*. Translated by Richard Miller, New York 1974, University of California Press 1989, p. 107. The original English quotation is: "Transitions are to passionate equilibrium what bolts and joints are to a framework." Mosettig used his own translation for an English title to his work. In *Théorie de l'Unité Universelle* (see note 12), Ibid., p. 135,: "Les transitions sont en équilibre passionnel ce que sont les chevilles et emboîtements dans une charpente." On the theory of transitions see ibid., pp. 135–140.

Fourier noticed "transitions" like these in both nature and in the field of human passions and obsessions. By this, he meant phenomena and occurrences which precisely because they occupy an undecidable intermediate position, or, as he sometimes put it, remain "neutral" with regard to given classifications, play a significant role in preventing the world from splitting up into different realms and in establishing a continuous coherence.[14]

[14] In structuralist terminology, for which in this case links can be found in Fourier's writing, one would speak of "neutral terms". Charles Fourier: *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 7, *Le nouveau monde amoureux*. Manuscrit inédit, texte intégral. Établissement, notes et introduction de Somine Debout-Oleszikiewicz avec un dessin original de Matta, Paris 1967, p. 5: "Le mode neutre qui est le lien universel du système de l'univers est presque inconnu des civilisés..." ("The neutral mode, the universal link of the system of the universe, is almost unknown to civilized societies…"). See Barthes: *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (see note 13), pp 106–109. See also (without reference to Fourier, however): Roland Barthes: *The Neutral: Lecture Course at the Collège de France (1977–1978)*, text established, annotated, and presented by Thomas Clerc under the direction of Eric Marty, translated by Rosalind E. Krauss and Denis Hollier, New York 2005.

Among these transitions, which dowel and join different realms of being with each other, the philosopher included creatures such as flying fish and bats, but also events such as birth and death.[15]

[15] Fourier: *Théorie de l'Unité Universelle* (see note 12), p. 135; idem: *Le nouveau monde amoureux* (see note 14), p. 6.

He would presumably also have approved of an idea that Mosettig's work seems to modify in an oddly refracted way, that is, that art is located at a transition point between nature and culture, matter and spirit, or – something we haven't even mentioned yet – object and name. This contradiction between object and name seems to have especially challenged Mosettig, inducing him to search for a possible transition. As mentioned earlier, the trees he grafted with varying success are named after apple varieties such as "Pinova", "Jonagold" or "Cherry Cox". These names of different varieties seem to act as labels that are attached to their respective carrier merely on the surface. However, Mosettig's ambition was to find a transition that allows the name to become surgical, so to speak, and to seep into the insides of its carrier. Thus, he performed the grafting according to the names of the variety and grafted a tree named "Cherry Cox" with nothing but other varieties whose only common feature is that their names refer to both apples and other plants: "Cornish Gilliflower", "Cox's Orange Pippin", "Salzburg Rose Apple", "Ananasrenette" [Pineapple Reinnet], and so on. One could also say: he chose varieties whose names create transitions and allow apples to pair up, at least nominally, with roses, carnations, oranges and so on.

On the one hand, Mosettig regularly made photographic portraits of the trees: strangely stiff snapshots of different states, to which naturally also their life after death as wooden sculptures belongs, and on the other hand, he captured them in precise drawings on paper, adding the operations performed on them in neat writing. Due to their rigidity and inflexibility these drawings tend to freeze and seal their subjects as if it were a matter of imitating or anticipating the death of some plants caused by grafting. It should be added that grafting was also performed in the graphic realm, for – not only in order to be able to locate the operations performed on the trees precisely but to also be able to name them equally precisely, in fact, always stating the name of the grafted variety – Mosettig introduced diagrammatic auxiliary lines. But these auxiliary lines which were drawn with the same sharp pencil as the outlines of the trees, are transitions in Fourier's sense: they connect locations on the drawn tree with names in the margin, thus they liaise between objects and titles and build bridges between drawn and written lines.

By fixing the tree on the drawing sheet and relating it to a nomenclature set out in writing, these connecting lines also recall that a linguistic aspect is part and parcel of each tree's rack or enframing ("Gestell"), namely in the form of the nomenclature that served as an operating manual for grafting. We should also note that in the drawings Mosettig labels the sculptural tree racks he constructed himself as "educational training systems". He insinuates that the trees are pupils and their grafting may be regarded as a process of subjectification. Along with the mentioned elements of that old, almost forgotten theory of art – the theory of surpassing imitation – the tree piece has apparently also adopted allegorical references to a different, educational art discourse. Whoever follows this discourse may imagine visual arts [in German 'Bildende Kunst'] as a transition between the concepts of 'Bild' [image] and 'Bildung' [education]. Therefore fine arts could help to turn subjects fragmented by the division of labour into integrated human beings (to quote an idea dating back to the birth of the specific concept of education which was developed not too long ago)[16] in order to achieve more or less the opposite of what happened to Mosettig's apple trees.

[16] See Hans-Jürgen Schings (ed.): *Der ganze Mensch. Anthropologie und Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 1994.

(Although also this opposite case has a tradition – just think of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.)[17]

[17] See Lebensztejn: *De l'imitation dans les beaux-arts* (see note 11), p. 45.

Anyway, the sometimes life-size full-figure portraits conferred the status of persons on the arboretum's pupils. Their biographies, engraved by incisions and (abrupt) transitions, were accurately documented and can still be tracked step by step. Once, during the winter, the artist presented one of the trees stripped of its leaves in the centre of an exhibition space. It was illuminated by the artificial light of light boxes showing portraits of former stages of its existence. Having gone into the state of hibernation, the pupil stood in the light of his own (thriving) past.

Of ants and cows

The apple tree piece is described so elaborately here because it sort of defines the field in which Mosettig's artistic thinking evolves. Some of his later works can be interpreted as specific transformations of motifs which first become identifiable in this work. The simplest transformation takes place when the apple trees or their racks are exchanged for other things without any fundamental change to their basic structure. The most important example of this is *Processual Minimalism* (2006).[18]

[18] On this work see, for instance, Vitus H. Weh: "The Forlorn Garden. On Cultivation and Greenhouses in the work of Klaus Mosettig", in: Klaus Mosettig: *Die Übergänge sind beim leidenschaftlichen Gleichgewicht …* (see note 9), pp. 14–21.

This work consists of a total of five hollow acrylic glass cubes, a large one in the centre, and four smaller ones that surround it like satellites. Tubes connecting the central cube with the satellites but not the satellites with each other confirm the hierarchical structure of the arrangement which, as the title suggests, could also be regarded as minimalist sculpture. It was, however, at the same time a formicarium in which a colony of red wood ants found enough plant material to build, among other things, a large breeding mound – in a process that the artist captured on camera just as accurately as he had done before with the apple trees. The 'minimalist' formicarium served as a *Gestell*, while the ants and their works succeeded the grafted trees and their fruit. And, similarly to the apple trees, here too, the initial distinction between artificial rack and natural content collapsed the moment it became clear that art could also be found on the content side – in this case in the form of anthills. Unlike the trees which were unable to produce any 'autonomous' work, the ants demonstrated that they themselves were capable of forming sculptures out of the found materials. This definitely didn't humanise the ants, but rather refers to the idea of a type of process art that is removed from humanity and that took place in the frame of a technical rack. It is considerably more difficult to figure out how the work *No Pleasure Without Bitterness* relates to previous works like the apple tree project or the formicarium described above.[19]

[19] For the sake of brevity we'll ignore the fact that in the title of this work, Mosettig has resumed an issue that had already been indicated in the Fourierian title of the tree piece, that is the connection/alliance of passions (or the passion of connections/alliances). This time, the title refers to a phrasing by Giordano Bruno. See Bruno: *The Heroic Frenzies* [1585], a Translation with Introduction and Notes by Paul Eugene Memmo Jr., University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 1964, Second Dialogue of Part One, pp. 38–39: "In fact, I shall go further; if it were not for the bitter in things there would not be delight, just as hard labor makes us find delight in rest; separation is the cause of our finding pleasure in union; and if we investigate the matter generally, it will always be found that one contrary is the occasion for the other contrary's desirability and pleasure."

This series of twelve relatively large drawings from 2004–2007 initially calls for a comparison with the apple tree drawings. Starting point and presentation are entirely different: while the apple trees were drawn directly from nature, Mosettig applies an indirect method here, drawing from projected slides, and while the trees were depicted in form of pure outline drawings without hatching, the exact opposite is the case in *No Pleasure Without Bitterness*: they are the result of hatching and outlines are consistently avoided. An artistic means that in drawings of the Old Masters complemented the outline is applied without the use of any other type of markings as a universal means of depiction. This Mosettig – or M-hatching (as we will call it for the sake of brevity), which the artist has employed ever since, shows features that should not be concealed here, for they are part of the tone that in a way makes this art's music. Mosettig works with layers of dense pencil lines. Like with any type of hatching, the lines are repetitive. And they are relatively short, all within a range of a couple of centimetres – like ascenders and descenders in handwriting on paper. There are no curves or flourishes; the lines are nice and straight, nevertheless their orderly straightness shows an inclination to the right. This inclination is common in other contexts, too: it is not only to be found in scripts of right-handed writers but is also known from hatching techniques used by artists since the Renaissance to create different shades of light by means of lines on paper. Such lines weren't necessarily straight, and they were drawn in all directions, for they often served the purpose of denoting the curvature of virtual object surfaces and their respective inclination in relation to the paper's surface. When the illustrators were relieved of these additional tasks of presentation, however, they tended to give their lines a slight inclination to the right, because with a certain posture and drawing tools which were common in Europe (in this respect there existed an unmistakable analogy between drawing and writing), this is the most *comfortable* way to draw lines. And this goes for Mosettig too. For as disciplined as he is in his hatching, he gives in to a certain physiological inclination of the hand holding the pencil.[20]

[20] On the question of 'drawing dispositifs' see Wolfram Pichler and Ralph Ubl: "Vor dem ersten Strich. Dispositive der modernen und vormodernen Zeichnung", in: Werner Busch, Oliver Jehle, Carolin Meister (eds.), *Randgänge der Zeichnung*, Munich 2006, pp. 231–255. With regard to Klaus Mosettig see also Wolfram Pichler: "Die ausgesparte Zeichnung", in: Klaus Mosettig: *Apollo 11*, 2008, ed. by Klaus Mosettig and Vienna Secession (on the occasion of the exhibition *Klaus Mosettig. Pradolux*, Secession Wien, 20.2.–13.4.2009), Vienna 2009, pp. 2–9.

The M-hatching introduced with the series *No Pleasure Without Bitterness* is, as already mentioned, comparatively short, straight and inclined to the right. But, if nothing else, with regard to the state of the pencils and the pressure applied when drawing, it is remarkably regular. This artist is quite busy sharpening his tools, for he wants the lines made with pencils that all are equally hard to be as similar as possible in terms of their width. He furthermore strives – and this is an important basic decision – to draw with steady pressure. For Mosettig, hatching indeed serves as means to create shades of brightness but quite unlike the Old Masters he employs only one means for this purpose: he controls the brightness of his lines solely by the choice of pencil and grade. Thus, when drawing, he neither varies the density of the layers of lines, nor the pressure; these parameters are kept as consistent as possible in order to allow a third, that is, precisely the pencil's grade, to determine brightness and darkness. Here, the shade of brightness is simply not a question of will or strength, but is applied by Mosettig as a kind of *readymade*. He abstains from continuous transitions between the fields of individual tonal values and accepts the fact that the pencil industry offers its product in discontinuous gradations. At this point, a structurally significant feature

can be noted that connects *No Pleasure Without Bitterness* to the apple tree piece, that is the deductive method. Not only that the drawings from this series are composed of countless lines; the lines themselves form fields or layers that are differentiated within the grade. Hence, in the end, this results in composite images which are not continua but more likely compotes (to mention this favourite dish of Charles Fourier).[21]

[21] On Fourier's penchant for compotes (that is, combined, composite food) see Barthes: *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (see note 13), pp. 116–117.

But what is it that was translated by M-hatching? The photographic models for this series of drawings – as already mentioned, Mosettig drew after projected slides – reveal among other things copies of a matter that had already been flattened itself by a certain type of 'projection'. We're talking about cowpat. Each particular cowpat had been photographed just like a cartographer records a landscape: strictly from above. This way, the cowpat's expanse could be reproduced while avoiding foreshortening as far as possible. Unlike a cartographer, the artist, however, made an effort to achieve a minutely detailed reproduction of the object projected onto the paper and by means of hatching rendered every light or dark area. And as any reference to the scale of the depicted surface is missing – the cowpat was cut out of its surroundings and floats on the paper as such an excerpt – an inscrutable visual impression is experienced: the relief that is perceived here could also be of enormous scale, it could be the surface of a huge celestial body.

Now a cow is of course, quite unlike a red wood ant, an animal that is close to humans, a product and medium of thousands of years of cultivation efforts. Since a recent conversion to grassland farming took place in Europe, especially in the Alps, it is also an essential factor for landscape preservation (not to mention meat and milk production). However, Mosettig regarded the cow from a somehow aporetic perspective – despite the proximity to certain forms of process art (one may think of how the young Richard Serra hurled lead onto his New York loft floor) – in so far as he highlights the possibly least cultivated aspect of this animal. Does this mean that Mosettig refined uncultivated cowpat (processed by means of continual chewing) with the help of M-hatching and turned it into artistic gold (or, as Piero Manzoni called it, "merda d'artista")? Perhaps. For us, the observation that certain essential conditions for Mosettig's art have been completely reversed seems more important than such speculations. In previous works, the artist, if he was even noticeable, was a kind of master who was in a position to rule over plants and animals. Here, he appears as slave mapping seemingly cosmic cowpats with the light of a technical instrument.[22]

[22] On the master-and-slave dialectic see: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, translated by J. B. Baillie, London 1967.

Before, he built a rack for other beings, now he builds one for himself – one that is comprised of slides, projectors, pencils and M-hatching, among other things. The fact that the rack no longer makes an appearance as sculpture, at least not in exhibition spaces, does not mean that it has disappeared. It is still an integral part of this art, just that the artist himself has entered the array and has taken place in the 'setup area'.

Thus, *No Pleasure Without Bitterness* constitutes a kind of conversion, a turning point on this artist's route. And after what has just been said, nobody will be surprised to hear that at precisely that moment he prepared to become – a ruminant.

On the awareness of projectors

Ever since the artist decided to "give something himself [instead of letting plants or animals work for him]"[23] – a decision leading to the cowpat work – he turned into a kind of drawing slave who reproduces photographs projected onto a wall by means of his particular hatching style.

[23] This is how we remember a sentence uttered by the artist a couple of years ago.

As the projected slides also include art works by Jackson Pollock or Josef Albers, for instance, it seems that the system has now become self-contained, and that the dichotomy of nature and art that had been both recalled and abrogated in previous works has been replaced by the relationship between art

and art in terms of original and reproduction (or copy). There was hence no lack of commentators who believed that with his reproductive art, Mosettig was mocking the "myth of the creative artist".[24]

[24] Wolfgang Ullrich: "Crossing Time", in: Klaus Mosettig: *Nature Morte*. Nuremberg 2010 (published as catalogue accompanying the eponymous exhibition at Kunstraum Dornbirn, 25.6.–15.8.2010), pp. 139–141, here p. 140. Cf. Henning Arnecke's catalogue entry on the work *Lavender Mist* (2010) that was shown first in Dornbirn, then in Karlsruhe in: Exhib. cat. *Déjà-vu? Die Kunst der Wiederholung von Dürer bis YouTube*, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, 21.4.–5.8.2012, ed. by Ariane Mensger, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe and Hochschule für Gestaltung Karlsruhe, Bielefeld/ Berlin 2012, p. 300sq. (cat. no. 103).

If nothing substantial is added to this interpretation it certainly produces a rather miserable image, for why should one aim for the hundredth time at a bear shot a long time ago? Beside this, however – and this is a substantial addition – it was also discussed as an attempt to revive the, in the 19th century still sophisticated culture of artistic art reproduction. According to Wolfgang Ullrich, in an age in which the reproduction of images is seemingly utterly unproblematic and is therefore taken for granted, an artist emerges, who once again clearly shows that the (manual) reproduction of art works always also includes translation and is thus a means of heightening and activating the view of the reproduced subject.[25]

[25] Ullrich: "Crossing Time" (see note 23).

In general, art reproduction cannot and should not be regarded and performed simply as plain copy but rather as reprise, refinement, and transformation, so that the reproduction would come into its own and were allowed to rhyme with refinement.[26]

[26] Wolfgang Ullrich: *Raffinierte Kunst. Übung vor Reproduktionen*, Berlin 2009.

In Klaus Mosettig's case this means to create an analogy between the reproduction artist and the gardener who grafts apple trees in order to distil spirits from their fruit – an obvious and tempting thought, which might enable the spectator to develop a particular taste for the hatching's varying shades. The fact that this hatching 'rubs' Pollock up in a very different way than, for instance, Albers doesn't only mean that the respective transformation is always different; it means that the hatching itself repeatedly appears in a new light, too – a light that the connoisseur will learn to distinguish and appreciate. And this pleasure promises further refinements, if you consider that slides can be projected laterally reversed, and that each side of the image can be rotated by 90, 180 and 270 degrees. The M-hatching is able to relate to any slide in eight different ways, which in turn correspond to eight different ways in which the respective subject can bring the M-hatching to life – options that Mosettig indeed made use of in works like *Self-portraits* (2011/12). It should also be noted that the diligent drawing slave makes progress in the course of executing his particular task. When he has assigned himself to reproduce the same Pollock painting fifteen times (*Untitled 1950.1 – Untitled 1950.15*), in the end there will be no less than fifteen variations of the same theme.

Although we ourselves have a weakness for refinements and distillates and take pleasure in this interpretation, at least its plea for acknowledgement of translation work, it nevertheless seems necessary to bring to mind a circumstance that appears to have been overlooked recently. Mosettig has by no means only reproduced slides of art works, but also quite different subjects; his reproductive art is hence not necessarily the reproduction of art, at least not as long as one assumes that art can only be produced by man. As mentioned earlier, the series of depicted works and series of works, which by now includes several Pollocks and "Alberse" (Mosettig's indeed uncommon but humorous form of pluralization assigns the artist's name to his paintings, as if these were his children), began with drawings of cowpat photos and also later Mosettig captured photos of surfaces that were not created by man and, what's more, had possibly never even been touched by a human being. In an exhibition at the Vienna Secession in spring 2009 the following drawn reproductions were on show: (1) fifteen drawings of a small-format *dripping* on paper by Jackson Pollock from 1950; (2) a drawing of Jackson Pollock's large painting *Number 32*, completed on a 1:1 scale on three overlapping sheets of paper; (3) a four-part drawing of pictures of moon rocks, which were taken on the well-known US space mission "Apollo

11" and distributed in form of slides; (4) three drawn "portraits" of old slide projectors.[27]

[27] Cf. exhib. cat. *Klaus Mosettig. Pradolux*, Secession Wien, 20.2.–13.4.2009, Vienna 2009, and the lucid exhibition review by Rolf Wienkötter: "Vom Zeichnen in der Zeit. Klaus Mosettigs abstrakter Blick auf das Konkrete", in: *Parnass* 1/2009, pp. 74–79.

Let's first take a look at the two large formats, *Apollo 11* (2008) and *Number 32* (2008/09). A comparison of these two pieces was all the more obvious as both were displayed on the floor. One was encouraged or seduced to neglect the categorical difference between an inanimate, most remote nature to mankind (moon rocks) on the one hand, and art (Jackson Pollock) on the other or, better still, to search for a "transition" in Fourier's sense in order to neutralise the difference. Of course one could bend down so low over the drawing of moon rocks that nothing was recognisable any longer and the 'intrinsic noise' of the M-hatching emerged in its full abstractness, although one would neither have forgotten the mute moon rocks nor made them speak, nor would it have resulted in an interesting abstract image. However, instead of regarding the dust-dry surface of the moon as a special type of art, one could also adopt the opposite approach and regard the Pollock picture as a piece of inorganic nature – a surface that exists somewhere in the universe and had once been photographed. This transition was without doubt more interesting than the other. Now, for instance, one was allowed to note that the prosaic use of M-hatching froze Pollock's painting and virtually took its breath away. It furthermore became clear that Pollock's painting must have been photographed in the same way as the moon rocks, that is, with the intention to obtain a preferably undistorted image of the object. The only difference was that rocks on the moon remind us that photographic images are per se *perspective* illustrations, while one tends to ignore this fact with photographic reproductions of paintings. With undistorted photographs one can no longer distinguish between a depiction in one-point linear perspective and an orthographic projection. But as we are familiar with orthographic projection, not least from cartographic representations, one was able to regard the photograph of Pollock's painting, and in consequence also Mosettig's *Number 32*, as a kind of cartography of this painting. The horizontal surface of the Pollock image that was formed under the effect of gravity had, as it now seemed, been mapped in the same way as the moon surface which was also horizontal and subjected to gravity. Personal names like "Jackson Pollock" or "Neil Armstrong" had been dropped and only technical terms such as "Number 32" or "Apollo 11" remained.

As lord and master of apple trees and ants, Mosettig demonstrated not only that, but also how art reappears on the side of nature from which it had previously been strictly distinguished. In the meanwhile, he had obviously begun to regard art as if it were a piece of inorganic nature, alien to man, what in Pollock's case is easy insofar as he described himself as "nature" (Pollock: "I am Nature") – although in a rather different sense related to the outdated aesthetics of the genius. Lastly, the "portraits" produced with the help of slide projectors, which were also on show in the Secession exhibition, contributed to confirm this point of view. The issue of portraying, which is addressed with this series title, applies to Mosettig's complete oeuvre. We have already mentioned that he made photographic and later drawn portraits of apple trees which he gave names like "Jonagold" or "Cherry Cox", and the portraits of projectors were titled according to their respective product names "Pradovit RC", "Pradolux 1", and so on. Now, one might think that the artist took photographs of the projectors and made slides in order to be able to copy them as projected photographs. Instead, however, he found another, technically far easier solution and let the projectors portray themselves. He did without slides and focused the lens on the apparently emptied insides of the particular projector. And this showed that each projector projected a different image – that is, one of specks of dust and other tiny things that had gathered on its lens. Although the projectors' spirit wasn't quite as clear as the apple trees', it was still a kind of spirit and, as if they were romantic artists, the projectors were able to 'express' this with the images they projected to the world.[28]

[28] For the connection between expression and projection see Meyer Howard Abrams: *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, New York 1953.

However, these projections could be translated into drawings even if the tiny specks of dust, hair and fibres almost disappeared in the projector's light and almost escaped the capture of the M-hatching due to their infinitesimally small surfaces.

The suggested conclusion was certainly not that slide projectors have human awareness but, more likely, that phenomena of consciousness could exist without (human) consciousness – for instance in images from the insides of projectors that were projected from surfaces onto surfaces that are receptive for lights, dust particles, ants and so on, the underlying idea being that there will still be images when all human life has vanished from the stage of the universe.[29]

[29] For the classical phrasing of this idea – it originates with Jacques Lacan – see Wolfram Pichler and Ralph Ubl: *Bildtheorie zur Einführung*, Hamburg 2014, pp. 119–125.

Mosettig's *Projector Portraits*, *Apollo 11* and *Number 32* point to this – at the same time sober and sublime – idea of a deserted but by no means picture-less world. Besides, they seem to nicely fit in an age in which most images are no longer looked at by anybody.

Alberti, Alpers, Albers

The particular relevance of the *Projector Portraits* is based among other things on the fact that they draw attention to the enframing ("Gestell") within which Mosettig (the draughtsman) pursues his work – a task whose progress he records as consequently as he did before with the apple trees and anthills. Any interpretation of his drawings has to include the analysis of this dispositif. Each time, the artist traces a phenomenon of light that a slide projector projects onto his studio wall. The arrangement that underlies his work is first a perspective one, and can be analysed as transformation of the model of perspective painting described by Leon Battista Alberti almost 600 years ago. In his famous treatise on painting, *Della Pittura* – the first text on art theory in post-ancient times – Alberti defined the painting as materialisation of a sectional plane, which is to be obtained by cutting through the optical pyramid.[30]

[30] Leon Battista Alberti: *On Painting* [First appeared 1435-36] Translated with Introduction and Notes by John R. Spencer, New Haven, 1970 [First printed 1956].

He qualified the optical pyramid as a set of rays – a pyramidal beam whose base is formed by a visible object, while the apex should coincide with the point from which the beholder is looking at this object. If one slices this pyramid of rays at a certain height as if it were a set of light conductors, and if one succeeds in capturing this sectional plane by materialising it, then, as the theorist believed, a painting will emerge. For a long time, an easily comprehensible scheme from everyday life that already Alberti had casually mentioned, has served to clarify this pictorial concept, i.e. the model of a view that moves from an interior through an open window (or an open door) and encounters all kinds of objects 'out there'. In the wall opening through which the gaze passes an image emerges – a virtual image, indeed, that can, however, be captured with the help of Alberti's theoretically founded painting, namely by replacing the section plane that is formed by the open window (or the open door) with the panel painting. One can therefore imagine a painting like this as a kind of window – a closed window, however, that pretends to be open.

The images that serve Mosettig for the production of most of his drawings can with equal justification as the paintings of which Alberti spoke be identified as sections through bundles of rays. After all, the light beam of the projector set up in his studio needs to *pass through* the slide in order to generate a phenomenon of light on the wall that relates to the slide in a similar way as the object relates to the painting in Alberti's theory. While Alberti located the eye of the painter at the origin of the optical pyramid, in Mosettig's setup this place is taken by the projector lamp. And where Alberti placed the object we find Mosettig's light phenomenon on the wall. This dispositif that is the starting point for Mosettig's drawings can also be analysed as a reversal of the scheme described by Alberti, for while here the object appears to be given and the image is yet to be produced, for Mosettig it is the exact opposite: the image (slide) already exists and now serves to produce an object that is again an image, namely of the light phenomenon on the studio wall. No less important than this reversal, however, is the fact that in Mosettig's drawing practice the point that was

reserved for the painter in perspective painting is now occupied by a technical instrument. While drawing, this particular place – called 'viewpoint' in one-point linear perspective theory (co-founded by Alberti) – is even reserved exclusively for the instrument. The instrument occupies this place and prevents anyone else from taking it. This also means that the perspective layout now no longer needs a human being, nor even consciousness in order to function. And it means that the artist is free to move away or come closer to the light phenomenon on the wall, which in turn can be seen as the successor of Alberti's object (to be depicted). The artist needn't keep his distance from the object that he wants to depict; he can capture it precisely where he finds it, that is, on a sheet of paper that is mounted on the studio wall. He can leave the position that theory and practice of the perspective image had assigned him, and instead let an optical instrument act in his place. He thus implicitly recognises that the projected images don't need him at all.

The idea of a world that can depict itself in a way that some surfaces become projection screens of others, regardless of whether anyone is looking, is at the core of a famous book published in 1983 on 17th century Dutch painting, *The Art of Describing.*[31]

[31] Svetlana Alpers: *The Art of Describing. Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*, quoted here from the Harmondsworth edition 1989.

Inspired, among other things, by experiences with (US-American) neo-avant-garde art (e.g. Jasper Johns) and related art criticism (e.g. by Leo Steinberg), art historian Svetlana Alpers juxtaposed two major European traditions of image production, the Italian and the Dutch. The Italian regards the image as a kind of stage on which people act and stories are told, whereas in the Dutch tradition the image is, above all, a means to describe those infinitely complex reflecting surfaces which can be found in the world. Perspective, Alpers further argued, is indeed applied in both traditions but in entirely different circumstances. For only in Italian tradition is the painter located *by definition* at the origin of the perspective pyramid, and only here is it appropriate to envision the image as a kind of window through which the painter looks to become a witness of human action. The Dutch, on the other hand, were guided more by the model of the *camera obscura* which also has a sort of pyramid of light beams but their point of origin remains vacant for there is only that hole through which light pours into the dark room, regardless of whether anyone is looking. However, this human absence at the root of the Dutch image concept, (re)constructed by Alpers, now corresponds to a certain aloofness from the human being with regard to possible subjects of painting. Although Dutch painters did indeed depict people, too, they did so not because they were interested in their actions or emotional stirrings, but simply because humans are inseparable elements of certain scenes of the visible world. As Alpers stated, Dutch painters had consistently conceived the world as though it were nothing but a surface reflecting light – faces and clothes included. This is also the reason why so many maps are to be seen in 17th century Dutch paintings – a type of painting that according to Alpers follows a certain "cartographic impulse", that is, the impulse to regard the visible world through the eyes of a cartographer for whom the world is not a stage on which one acts and suffers, but rather a surface that is projected onto another surface (paper or canvas) to be captured there with all necessary diligence.[32]

[32] See Alpers: *The Art of Describing* (see note 30), ch. 4, "The Mapping Impulse in Dutch Art".

When Klaus Mosettig read Alpers' famous book many years ago, he will not have missed the author's affinities for US-American art of the 1960s. In any case, it is only due to these points of reference that he could have become an artist for whom a significant part of what Alpers claimed of the 17th century Dutch applies: one can regard him as a 'description artist' who "with a sincere hand and a faithful eye"[33] (literally) de-scribes light-reflecting surfaces and plays out on his own terms that "cartographic impulse" about which Alpers wrote such fascinating lines.

[33] The title of the third chapter in Alpers' book, "With a Sincere Hand and a Faithful Eye", is an adopted quotation by Hooke; see Robert Hooke: *Micrographia*, London 1656, A 2v. The passage in question is cited by Alpers on p. 73.

One can in fact say that the artist has now transformed into a recording machine, a kind of photographic

camera that translates registered exposure values into hatching of different grey tones. And possibly, even the fact that Mosettig finally started to pay homage to the square can be traced to his reading *The Art of Describing*; one only needs to flip the "p" in "Alpers" – like a slide that is inserted back into the projector after half a somersault – to erase the difference between two names and to mistake or even hook up Alpers, the art historian with Albers, the painter. And with this, we are back at the starting point of this long discourse and can once again address the question of how to grasp the peculiar (ghostly) appearance of Albers' paintings in Mosettig's drawings.

A final ghost story – for the time being

So let's return to the beginning of the text where we tried to approach the *Homages* (and, with them, the *Withdrawals*) in two steps: First, and not without ulterior motives, we built on characterizations of painting from the 1960s that are associated with Minimalism, especially on art critic Michael Fried's descriptions of Frank Stella's paintings. At the time, he emphasised the "deductive" character of Stella's artistic method by inferring Stella's compositions of stripes only from the qualities of the image carrier and the properties of the painting tools and not from a potential artistic subjectivity prior to the pictures.[34]

[34] Michael Fried: "Three American Painters: Noland, Olitski, Stella", in: *Art and Objecthood. Essays and Reviews*, Chicago and London 1998, pp. 213–269, esp. pp. 251ff.

However, we ascertained that with the *Homages* such a deductive method – the reason of the composition being a principle purely intrinsic to the image – was insufficient, so in a second step we introduced an instance outside the picture, that is the beholder for whom the composition appears to be depicted. The specific wit, or the specific 'lesson' (and a teacher he was) of Albers' paintings was, therefore, that he related the objective and subjective aspects that form the unity of the image by overlaying, or rather, by equating the arrangement of surface and space, with the result that when looking at the painting, they had to be divided first to understand the composition's dual orientation. We don't want to go into further detail about the effects of the colours here, all we will note is that with the *Homages*, Albers positioned himself between *minimalism* and *color-field painting* and in doing so, he will once again have related to the two significant European traditions of image production: on the one hand, to the idea of the image as transparent surface through which one can look at the world stage as through a window which Albers turned into a window through which the world beams in as light; and on the other, to the idea of the image as opaque surface on which apparently the world automatically delineates itself. Here one can find motifs which possibly appealed to Mosettig. And what is more: in Albers' *Homages* the conditions of image production became so clearly the motif that they are, in fact, the congenial match for Mosettig's enframings. With their intrinsic glow and the composition based on one-point linear perspective that is reflected in the grid of squares on the picture field Albers' paintings inherently seem to be already the result of a projection. To insert such an image into a slide projector and to project it onto the wall therefore seems to be almost redundant. In addition, especially after having dealt at length with Pollock's very different, (supposedly) expressive subjectivity, Mosettig may have felt attracted to Albers' conception of art with its introverted and systematic productivity which indeed is closer to his own.

But let's come back once and for all to Klaus Mosettig's *Withdrawals*, and look at them within the context of an exhibition. According to the mentioned image concepts we have basically two options. As the artist doesn't present his drawings together with the projectors, it is possible to look at them from a certain distance, precisely the way one should regard a perspective image. Whoever does this, takes the place of the projector which projected the light object that the artist had copied on the studio wall. With the *Withdrawal* series one can imagine this projector as successor or substitute for a camera which had recorded a painting by Josef Albers that hung on another wall. What one is dealing with is at least a tripartite series of perspective receptors and projectors: a camera, a slide projector, and finally, the respective spectator. This corresponds to a line of objects or images (a painting by Albers, a photograph of this painting, a slide in a projector, a light object on the studio wall). In this art, subjects and

objects apparently only appear in series whose individual links partly replace, partly substitute each other – an issue we can only briefly mention here. But, and this is the second option, one can also look at one of Mosettig's completed drawings in a similar way as it was produced, that is in a movement that at the same time devotes itself to and scans the surface. In this case, the image becomes a sort of landscape that is not opposite the viewer's eye, like in a perspective painting, but rather a landscape through which it moves, for instance by tracing the actions of the pencils, which have 'shown up' on the surface. Mosettig's drawings encourage such a close-up, 'scanning' approach simply because, unlike Albers' paintings, they do not conceal the process of their creation. The artist's lines are clearly discernible, and the grey surfaces tightly filled with lines attract attention. What becomes clear beside the already mentioned qualities of this texture are the condensed layers of time stored within it – time that brings us back one last time to the site of production, where we find the artist enframed by slides, projectors, pencils and M-hatching.

To record a slide with a motif by Albers on one of Mosettig's image carriers will take weeks, in which the artist, at times standing, at times sitting (on the floor, too) will do nothing else but draw line after line on the sheet of paper from top left to bottom right. At most, this monotonous (re)production process that indeed sinks into the autonomic nervous system, is interrupted by switching the slide projector on and off; with the projector turned on, Albers' slide will outshine the drawing sheet and cover up the actual production process; with the projector switched off, the production process, and with it the composition's slow but steady growth, will become visible in natural light. With this equally obsessive and controlled method the necessary effort is opposed to Albers' strict rule of "minimal means, maximum effect"[35] for it seems as though Mosettig were spending a maximum of means for a comparatively minimal effect.

[35] Cf. exhib. cat. *Minimal Means, Maximum Effect* (see note 2).

But this would be an incomplete analysis of the artistic endeavour that needs to be assessed in its entirety, namely by taking the performative aspect of this (re)productive process into account.[36]

[36] On the performative aspect see: Wienkötter (see note 26).

In relation to the time it takes to produce them, Mosettig's pictures are not only sections through the pyramid of vision or scrupulous cartographic records which by implication would turn their producer into a mere copyist, a cribber, comparable with Flaubert's heroes Bouvard and Pécuchet, who at the end of their self-imposed educational programme that had introduced them to orcharding, geology, spiritism, paedagogy and a number of other things, have a carpenter build a double-sized desk only for them to practise their old profession of copyist.[37]

[37] Gustave Flaubert: *Bouvard and Pécuchet* (1881) followed by *The Dictionary of Accepted Ideas* and *The Catalogue of Fashionable Ideas* in a new translation by Mark Polizzotti with a preface by Raymond Queneau, Dalkey Archive Press, Urbana–Champaign 2005.

No, these images are, above all, also sections through time, to which they are related like *stills* to a film. To stay with this metaphor which is evoked by the hum of the projector in Mosettig's studio, one could see in each individual image the closing frame or final *still* of a film – an animated film indeed, one that addresses the production of the image itself. Or, one could also regard all the work on the Albers series that has been going on for more than two years as one single, excessively long film in which every single completed image represents one still of an ongoing production process. As such, every single image, in fact every single line, always also means a cut into the flesh of one's lifetime which again turns the images into portraits (literally in the sense of *pro-trahere* for pulling out or bringing to light) of an artistic biography – a biography that, as part of its own subjectivization process, not only allows, but virtually seeks transitions to other states of being, accepts becoming plant, animal, machine, but also a biography that, for this purpose, closely connects to other artistic biographies, or let's say, grafts onto them and, growing with them, grows together with them. The *Withdrawal* series thus actually seems to belong to the studio to which the artist retreats to ruminate over everything again in the light of his own past

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that surrounds him there as image gallery on the walls. However, as pictures at an exhibition the drawings are not only ghosts of Albers' *Homages* deprived of their colouristic lifeblood, but in a certain sense always also ghosts of themselves – products whose creation process could be lost on the viewer. This is a problem that Mosettig has been confronted with for quite some time, and that on earlier occasions may have made him think of adding something to the completed and exhibited copies that would keep their creation process on record precisely by continuing it. We are talking about the catalogues that he made on the occasion of his exhibitions at the Vienna Secession (2009) and at Kunstraum Dornbirn (2010). At the exhibition in Dornbirn (to describe only this example), copies of the catalogue signed by the artist were available for free – copies in which a scan of the drawing on show, *Lavender Mist*, was reproduced.[38]

[38] Mosettig: *Nature morte* (see note 23).

Just like the artist had copied his model on a 1:1 scale, he had the scan of the copy printed on a 1:1 scale in the book, in such a way that the scanner – like the projectors in the *Projector Portraits* previously – revealed itself to some extent, namely (among other things) its perforated padding that the huge drawing had been lying on while it was scanned.

But how do you fit a reproduction or cartographic record that reproduces its object on a 1:1 scale in an exhibition catalogue? Mosettig applied a method that is commonly used in map books: the template was cut up in small portions, which were arranged in a familiar reading order. The closed book showed the reproduced image as a dense, almost three-dimensional recombination around its edges. But, since when one opened the book the reproduced scan repeatedly revealed the edges of the sheet of paper that had been drawn on as well as the scanner's surface and the greyscale, one had enough points of orientation to be able to reconstruct the entire context. Flipping through this 'map book' from front to back one became a second- or third-degree scanner that systematically scanned the printed image once again from top left to bottom right. This way the spectator could understand the production process by which the exhibited drawing had been made in a long series of working days approximately corresponding to the number of 'map book' pages. What one held in hands was not only a further, easily transportable level of refinement of Mosettig's reproduction art ("all the spirit of my art"). It was also above all a reprise of a complete dispositif, that is, the enframing ("Gestell") within which this de-scription artist pursues from morning to night his perhaps monotonous and, because it dries up all objects, possibly even iconoclastic, in any case well regulated employment.

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