

CREATIVE MEMORIES

To be introduced to the works of Janaina Tschäpe is to indulge in a world of ever shifting forms and medias, a floating river of interacting shapes and bright colours, whether the work in question is a video, a painting, a photograph or a sculpture. It is to indulge in a world where the rigid gap between Romanticism and science is questioned or even ceases to exist.

The New York based artist Janaina Tschäpe was born on 1973 in Munich, Germany and raised in São Paulo, Brazil. She received her BA from the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Hamburg and her MA from the School of Visual Arts in New York. Setting out as a painter from the German tradition of the 90s in which conceptualism had a somewhat dominant position over painting, Janaina Tschäpe chose a path that led her through sculpture and performances which again opened up photography and video to her. Exactly as her concise visual expressions unfold an organic universe, wherein colours and forms intervene in a dynamic shifting of zones and roles - so is her approach towards the medias she is working with in constant flux. She expands them, letting the intimacy of the performance flow to the photographs or the paintings, or letting the painterly sensuality flow to the sculptures. Movement and time are core issues in her artworks as well as in her approach towards her work.

Perhaps that is why water has such a prominent place in her artworks – the ever-shifting element that can take up various forms, shifting freely between steam, mist, fog, snow, or clouds, interacting with the surroundings and depending on them as well as changing them. In the sculpture *Building Clouds*, 2015, this interchanging condition is reflected in the surfaces of ten crystallized objects of various dimensions and geometrical forms, stacked on top of each other. Clouds are in fact floating water drops that affect our perception of the sky; they function as a filter through which the light from the sun passes by, and in that process, the colour of the sky will change for our eyes. The surfaces of the crystallized objects in Janaina Tschäpe's work are held in different colours of blue, from nearly white to a shade so deep it is almost black. The different shades float into each other, on the one hand mimicking the visual appearance of the sky, but on the other hand combining colours that would not be visible at the same moment in time. It is an extract of memories, where the untouchable sky and the ever-changing clouds are transformed into frozen geometrical forms; boxes containing memories.

The sharp edges in the crystallized form can at first be seen as the opposite of the amorphous or organic beings that are significant elements in other works by Janaina Tschäpe's work such as the series of photographs, *Dormant*, 2016 or the painting *Treffen Im Wald (Meeting in the woods)*, 2016. However, the crystallization process itself has to do with an element changing from one visual appearance to another. In that way, water as an element, is like the amorphous being that inhabit several others of her works. They are some kind of creature; without doubt, they belong to nature, but it is impossible to grasp exactly what they are.

Intimacy intact

No matter how amorphously and hence difficult to grasp, the universe that Janaina Tschäpe presents to us, has a strong inner logic, driven by curiosity and memories of perception, where remembrances, intimate and personal as they are, are transformed into a coherent meaningful structure. In the mural *Mina sleeping*, 2016, memory's function as a creative force in Janaina Tschäpe's works becomes visible. The mural is commissioned by Holbæk Art and is situated in the Danish city of Holbæk where it takes up to more than 100 m² and is located in the public space for everyone to see. It is composed with floral elements in deep green, interacting with narrow and long rectangular fields in turquoise, light blue, pink and yellow. It is readily abstract even though it contains glimpses of naturalistic elements. There is a source to the mural that is in stark contrast to both its dimensions and the public aspect of the work. It is an abstraction of a highly intimate and personal situation: Janaina Tschäpe's sleeping daughter in her studio. It is a situation so

full of tranquility and filled with feelings, of intimacy and trust. It was reference for a figurative painting of the situation and was afterwards transformed into another, abstract, painting. This abstract painting functioned as the starting point of the mural. The process from the sleeping daughter in her studio, to the gigantic mural in a public space preserves the intimacy at the same time as it is made available for a larger public. That is truly a wonder.

Strategies of accessibility

During the last couple of years, Janaina Tschäpe has, to a still larger degree, used places and situations that she has experienced herself as points of departure. Like that of her daughter sleeping. Landscapes known to her appear everywhere in her works, but they are without the significant features that could allow us to locate the actual setting. In a coherent stream from Janaina Tschäpe's memory to us run extracts of different experiences; a specific code of colour, or an order of forms. She magnifies perceived factual elements, however small they may be, from a situation, a landscape, a dream, an element or an object. She works with the material given, like a poet using metonymy, letting a certain part stand for the whole.

Metonymy is one strategy, composition another, in her persistent attempt to render the inner landscape of memory accessible and meaningful to us. In the two paintings *Früchte Tragen (Fruta)*, 2016, and *Pássaro*, 2016, she follows the rules of classical landscape composition. In *Früchte Tragen (Fruta)*, you see the dark and colourful yellow, red and purple in the foreground, the red and darker blue in the middle, and the light blue and pink in the background, so that a visual space is created in the painting, an optical illusion of depth, of earth and sky. In *Pássaro*, the dark purple and blue are in the foreground, the middle is an interaction of dark orange and purple, light blue and clear yellow tones that lead up to the background with larger fields of yellow and light pink and the contrasting dark blue in the right corner. Both paintings reflect how a classical landscape or seascape is composed in order to generate the viewer's perception of depth, hence opening up the idea of landscape to us.

Unfolded extracts of memories

Where Romanticism opened up the realm of a nature imbedded with subjective feelings, Janaina Tschäpe's works explore and unfold the landscape further, diving into the peculiar phenomenon of memory. Memory is what binds us together in a common understanding, giving history and identity to our community, but at the same time, memory is deeply personal. That is to say that memory is both a connecting and a dividing factor. It is the personal memory that Janaina Tschäpe processes in her works, but by transforming them into codes of colour or structures of form, she makes them accessible to a common understanding. Like a scientist in her laboratory with a magnifying glass, Janaina Tschäpe explores her memories, and her works are visual extracts of them. That is where Romanticism and science meet.

Janaina Tschäpe is unfolding the creative effects of memories, allowing her own to move and wander and to create glimpses of perceived nature. There is a strong inner logic in her works, where the organic features are mimicking the way she handles the different medias and vice versa. Form and context seems to flow together in a constant movement. That is why, what at first glance seems to be a contrast between solid geometrical forms, in a sculpture as *Building Clouds*, and the spontaneity and painterly appearance in the small dimensioned oil paintings such as *The Stars in My Universe*, 2016 and *Wolken Straub*, 2016, turns out to be different approaches to the same subject; unfolded extracts of memories.