

Pavel Strnad

The work of the Czech artist Pavel Strnad, born in 1977, reflects his education at the Art and Architecture Academy of Prague where he entered the graphic art and visual communication studio, before finally joining the film and graphic television studio. As has been shown in his first solo exhibition, 'Horror Vacui', at the Galerie Lucile Corty in 2008, his work is deeply inspired by graphic art. In his drawings, as in his animated films, the search for a balance of lines and shapes is crucial.

Through the use of lines and geometrical shapes, such as straight lines, circles or rectangles, Strnad creates abstract worlds where the observer loses all orientation. With simple techniques such as drawings of black lines on paper he creates surreal universes. The repetition of simple shapes, their direction, their spacing and the play with empty spaces allows him to bring to life on paper fantasy forms in three dimensions. These recall organic forms as revealed when one observes nature under a microscope. Nonetheless they remain unreal. For Pavel Strnad it seems to be a game: he experiments with the shapes and through this he deconstructs the birth of three dimensional space. He is far from any over-intellectualisation of his work, rather showing a love for playing with shapes, and he realises his work with the dexterity of a real craftsman. His works have no aim other than expressing what they are, they serve no other purpose. He uses the means of graphics yet without delivering a message. Through this approach, Strnad leaves the context of applied arts and his creation becomes free and independent.

Strnad also experiments with animated films. The simplest ones such as 'Chaos' or 'Shyning' are a direct continuation of his works on paper. In his films he gives life to what he sets down on paper. He animates his shapes, giving them a new dimension: movement. What matters is no longer the disposition of geometrical forms in space, but also their succession. Rhythmic, dynamic and absorbing, these films through their application of a basic vocabulary of forms, attract the observer into an abstract universe. Sometimes this universe, where the geometrical forms follow each other with an almost mechanic logic, is reminiscent of the accuracy of clockwork. The great sense of rhythm is equally fundamental to his movies in colour and sound. The often surrealist characters as they appear in 'Vakuum' (or in his photographic prints), for

example, seem to follow a kind of dance with a carefully planned choreography. It is this choreography, achieved after exigent work on the editing that lends the film its logic, its vitality. The meaning remains hidden. It is only the sensation that occurs while watching the spectacle of form and colour that takes the observer into an unreal world with a troubling or even oppressing atmosphere, which conveys meaning. Is it the excess of sensation while watching the film that urges the spectator to wish for 'emptiness', to get rid of the excess of images which seem to emerge from the unconscious? Bringing the observer face to face with the emotions of 'Headvicca' allows him to realise that Strnad can not only recreate a three dimensional space with the help of graphic elements, but also has the capacity to master these graphic elements in order to reflect the multi-faceted and unpredictable human emotions. This seems to make fun (in a friendly way) of the visitor of the exhibition as soon as he turns his back. The visitor is facing the 'human' reaction of a virtual being, and faces the work of a humorous artist – which is at times somewhat dark.

The works of Pavel Strnad retrace an evolution from the simple to the complex. His works reveal the fundamental elements of all visual constructions of the world and its perception. He creates worlds based on associative logic, which work in the same way as the sub-conscious. The fear of emptiness brings Pavel Strnad to populate the blank page, to animate a phantasmagorical universe which applies the vocabulary of the real yet takes the observer into surreal spaces.