

*For several years now, you have been making drawings on standard velour carpets, which, in terms of both their dimensions and their appearance, are reminiscent of paintings. How did you come up with the idea for this group of works?*

It began in 2006. I had been painting watercolours for several months, very different motifs, in some cases based on photographs. I have clear memories of blurry landscapes, photographed from a moving train. I was interested in making forms dissolve. The motion blur or the view through fogged-over panes of glass provided a pretext for this. Over time, the pictures became more and more monochrome and I ended up only paying attention to transitions and colour gradations.

During this period, I found myself in a carpet store, in which one wall was covered in velour – with a large number of different traces and markings on its surface. It was not my intention to use this material as a medium for my artworks, but rather I imagined a piece of velour on a wall in my studio that I could use to make sketches, which I could draw quickly and just as quickly erase again. But then it became clear to me that the appearance of this pictorial surface was very different from all my other pictures. This in and of itself would certainly not have been interesting enough; the special thing about it was that I could transfer a great deal of what I was preoccupied with at the time in the field of painting onto this unknown medium. With surprising results.

*Your practice is obviously characterised by a preoccupation with painting: its history, its various manifestations and the questions it poses. Could you be more concrete about which aspects of painting are especially interesting for you?*

That's a very broad question and I would like to answer almost instinctively that everything about painting interests me. This also includes the question of what that actually is: painting, and to be more concrete, the picture. There is perhaps one aspect that I

could be more precise about: I'm interested in a particular relationship, namely that between the motif and the form that (re)presents it in the world, the "motif carrier". In what I am doing, I recognize the repeated attempt to critically examine this relationship. With what at times perhaps are roundabout methods, I try to find out something about this relationship and create new pictures.

*How do you find your motifs and how important are these for you?*

I do not search for topics or forms. I cannot answer the question directly. I see the world – that is to say that which surrounds me and the pictures that emerge out of it, the transpositions and translations – and I react to this by beginning to formulate things. There are painters who claim that their motifs are unimportant, that they are merely an occasion, an excuse to paint, frameworks or containers into or onto which art is attached or placed – I have to agree with them. But, in the end, it is just as true that the motif is the "face" of the picture, so to speak. It's this inextricable link that drives me crazy – I find it exciting and mysterious.

*Within the group of works on velour carpets, there are certain motifs which appear time and again. The motif of the Nativity, for example, appears to be of central significance for you. What is it about this motif that fascinates you so much?*

This motif is so well-known, one could even say exhausted, that it takes an unusual setting to breathe some new life into it. The way in which this motif is visualized is crucial. Jan Kämmerling wrote a very beautiful text for this book – in it, he demonstrates how inextricably entwined form and content really are.

*What led to your decision to take up the motif of the Nativity? – Could you also briefly describe your working process, from finding the motif to the final picture?*

One Christmas, my parents' manger somehow caught my attention. It was also the first one I photographed. After that, I shot photos of mangers in various other places: in churches, city halls, hotels and boarding houses, as well as in other people's homes. I find my motifs by watching and observing, without any particular goal; it's not about research. The example of the manger is perhaps helpful here: Imagine sitting slightly dazed on the sofa during the holidays, daydreaming your way onto this small stage with its wooden figures and manifold material details. And then you start putting things in order and analyzing them, becoming convinced that it could be a good motif, transferred onto a flat monochrome surface that oscillates between light and dark. Not all my pictures done in velour are modelled after photographs, but the Nativity scenes were in fact transferred in great detail with the help of a projector.

*Since you explained earlier how you came to discover velour as a picture carrier, it would now be interesting to find out which special features characterise this specific material.*

The velour pictures are only one of several groups of works that emphasize the relationship between the motif and the picture as a carrier of meaning. I should stress that I do not make pictures on particular topics; in this sense, there are also no "series" that are intended to demonstrate or prove something particular. I reject this entirely. What fascinates me about the velour surface is the effect the material has on the formulations "written" into it.

This effect can be experienced as dominant, though the various results point in quite a different direction. The arrangement is extremely limited, since I do not add any other materials; that is to say, I process and manipulate this surface to the extent that it allows itself to be manipulated. Each picture is monochrome, and within this one shade of colour, there is a spectrum of tonal gradations, with the darkest and the lightest as the perimeters. I find these perimeters –

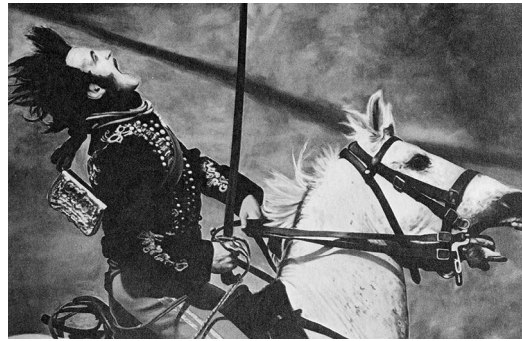


Abb. / fig. 28 Franz Gertsch: *Huaa...!*, 1969

and the way in which I work on the picture, the time I spend with it – to be exciting. In the end, however, it's all about the effect.

*Simply touching the surface of one of your carpet pieces could cause damage to the motif drawn into it. What does this fragility of your picture carriers mean to you?*

If I had the choice, my spontaneous wish would perhaps be that the surfaces of the velour pieces could somehow be stabilized after completion: completely impervious, stable and thus practical. But I'm not really sure that that's what I really want. The fact that the picture surface is fragile also means that the formulations forfeit a sense of finality – and this is important. This has an effect on how the pictures are perceived, which is why, when one describes them, one is more likely to say that they “manifest” instead of “present” something.

*To what extent then do contents, form and material determine the effect or impression of your works?*

It is difficult to talk so concretely about the effect of pictures and, in doing so, focus on the material more than anything else. So much comes together in one picture and, in the best case, what one cannot do is precisely this: Isolate individual components and determine their significance. When I think about the media and techniques of painting, I always think about the caves of Lascaux. This liberates me, since a particular focus on panel painting and, even more specifically, on particular media, such as oil on canvas, suddenly seems absurdly reduced. Think about what they did in these caves: from the application of colour using small blowpipes filled with pigment to the spraying of fluid paint with their mouths etc. When one talks about the exoticism of a medium, one has to ask: exotic in relation to what? The way I see it, the means applied have their own inherent justification. And I like extreme characters, such as

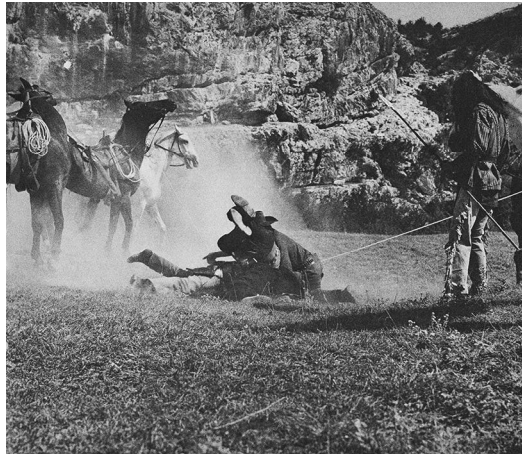


Abb. / fig. 29 Filmstill, *Winnetou 1*, 1963

Richard Artschwager and Georges Seurat, who accept the risk that their methods and means might turn out to be rather idiotic.

*You work especially in series. How and why did it come about that you tend to work in groups?*

I am also a little surprised that I seem to work exclusively in series. There are as good as no individual pictures or objects, and when they occur, they are only inadvertently singular, because they cannot be integrated into a particular series.

Before I began studying, I was preoccupied in a playfully theoretical way with fundamental questions concerning the preconditions of pictures. The result was an approximately 200 page-long treatise with drawings and texts, followed up by a series of 20 pictures. (1996/97, cat. 34, 35, 37 - 40)

Then, during my studies, I painted almost only trees for nearly three years, and you could describe the ten best results as a series. (cat. 15 -21)

I also painted on leaves from trees. Here, certain aspects of both series came together, although they are separated by several years. (cat. 119 - 122) It happens quite often that, at some point, a series of pictures seems to be exhausted and then, after some time, I approach the subject once again. But there is no system behind all this. It is merely a result of my working process. This year, I took up the series of *Sets* (cat. 77 - 107) again – a series that was actually completed in 2009 – in order to expose them to changed conditions. (cat. 12, 13)

*The abovementioned variations and additions to the work group under the collective title of Sets – i.e. the new of Dormant and Morphin series – are, in addition to the velour carpet works, also part of your exhibition in the Kunstverein Oldenburg. Could you say something about these series? What are the specific characteristics of these groups of works; what makes them different from the others?*



Abb. / fig. 30 Filmstill, *Winnetou 1*, 1963

For the *Sets*, I painted the undersides of kitchen pots and other metal containers – creating a reproduction, or to put it better, a painterly interpretation of what there was to see before. Thus, on one part of their surface, they carry an interpretation of their own appearance. As a result, they are shifted out of the realm of “normal” objects into the realm of pictures. It was almost a matter of course that, from these objects, further reproductions were created in the form of documentary photographs. With the *Dormant* and *Morphin* series, I wanted to pick up on this – the fact that one picture can generate further pictures – and take it further. I was also curious to see if I could make the distinction from the original model – the difference itself, so to speak – visible through deformation.

*Also included in the exhibition in Oldenburg are works from the Pistill der Iris series. Could you say something about this series?*

Prior to this, I produced several small-format drawings with pastel crayons on sandpaper (cat. 24); but when I tried this on larger formats, I discovered that this paper had its own special presence, which I could only weaken by drawing on it. (cat. 41 - 48) These pictures were described as projection surfaces, because there were no longer any drawings on them. The surfaces, however, do not really invite imagination, but are actually resistant and self-willed. They are characterized by their colour, format and granulation and, as with the velour pictures, make you aware that pictures must be lit and that they change depending on the type of lighting used.

*With these comments on your various groups of works, it seems possible to be able to map out a certain structure within your work as a whole. Could you, by way of conclusion, explain how these various groups of works relate to each other?*

All my works are pictures. The differences are, in my opinion, much smaller than their commonalities, even

though the extremely disparate materials and motifs might possibly make one think differently. The connecting factor lies especially in the common artistic approach: in the creation of a situation and the experiencing of possibilities and consequences. With the aforementioned series from 1996/97, for example, the starting point was one single motif, which I examined and varied with the most divergent techniques. The atmosphere of the individual picture was determined more than anything else by the various materials used. With the velour pictures, there is a great limitation; but here, the relationship between the motif and the material employed has been reversed. The material and technique remain the same, but that which takes place on the pictorial surface varies and determines the essence of the individual pictures. This is why I do not consider the velour pictures to be one series or group of works. Since 2006, several series have developed out of this, which, in this case, all consist of the same material. The velour, together with the technique, forms a medium.