

The Nova Channel

Art appears to be unsuitable for television. The continuous flow of images does not suit it. At most, art serves to portray VIPs or politicians attending vernissages, to fill the gap in late night programming with hagiographic documentaries, or to pep up television quizzes meant for a family audience with reassuring general knowledge.

Which artist wrote in his theoretical essays “it is an attempt to extend the monochromatic throughout the room and at the same time to reach the limit of visual perception”: A) Mark Rothko B) Nils Nova C) Pablo Picasso?

Who could such a question move other than an audience interested in art? In actual fact it is not surprising that contemporary artists are grappling with the theme of “television”. This is not only because artists are taking an interest in today’s TV-controlled society, but also because the medium offers, at a formal level, links with a theoretical discourse on art. This is where Nils Nova’s interest in television seems to lie.

The television monitor, like the big screen, is a projection surface that offers infinite possibilities and that yearns for content. This comparison inspires Nils Nova, a devotee of painting, although his artistic talent is not limited to this genre.

In some of his early paintings we find a black painted frame. It depicts exactly the black inactive frame that delimits old television screens. At the in the center of these big screens, which are hung like a diptych in a corner, is the generation of spatial experiences, which are increased, despite the formal economy of a two dimensional abstract painting. The idea of the surface originating pictorial fiction is both thematised and questioned. It is almost a critical apologia of the Trompe-l’Œil.

Nils Nova knows, however, that even a television that is switched off has magical spatial powers: we can watch the world mirrored in its screen. The surroundings are reflected in the grey tones of the TV in “stand-by”, and it imposes an eerie reversal of the perspective within which we see this everyday object: from observed to observer. In this way, television becomes a mute witness of what occurs in the spatial context. Only the sharp insight of an artist capable of irony could reveal this to us.

Art and television might be said to meet at a metaphorical level. Seen in this light, even the onlooker’s attempt to interpret a work might be seen as “seeing further” (in German the word for watching television, “fernsehen”, is a compound of the words “sehen” to see and “fern” far) in order to reach something more than the surface offers. Nils Nova’s desire to show his art in a book in the form of a television is not, therefore, a daring attempt. The overlapping of media becomes evident and the images clear. As if we had wiped the dust from the screen of our own television set.

Giovanni Carmine, 2005

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Essay from the book Screens
ISBN 978-3-907474-15-0