

Kristine Kern

One of seven from afar

Anne Marie Ploug works in a universe in which art and everyday life meet. Her pictures draw their inspiration from many different sources: the idioms of the mass media are combined with those of art history, the aesthetics of East and West enter into a fruitful symbiosis. From 1995 to 2001 Ploug's primary inspiration derived from Japanese culture and lifestyles. It all started with her fascination with the cartoon series Manga and various spin-off products, but later her interest in Japan extended to comprise such different forms of visual expression as Hokusai's woodcuts and Playstation 2 computer games. In Ploug's artistic production, which includes both painting and prints, this has manifested itself in a number of dynamic pictures in which written characters, cartoon figures and other visual emblems are mixed in the same fragmentary way as the visual information in a computer window. One example is the series Love Act from 1999, in which large-eyed, lightly clad girls of the kind to be found in Manga appear on the same canvas as written characters and love scenes borrowed from 14th century Japanese woodcuts.

In Anne Marie Ploug's later pictures the point of departure is still Japanese, but Manga has been abandoned in favour of more ramified sources of inspiration that also involve other forms of cultural expression. These pictures are simpler and thus quieter in impact. Here you will often see a section of a motif, for example a girl's legs or a hand holding an umbrella, in what is otherwise an almost monochrome picture space. Here the little things of everyday life have replaced the visual extravagance of the mass media. And the possibly naive but emancipated heroine of Manga has been replaced by the pure innocence of childhood in paintings like Flyaway, Waiting for the Sun and MTX—Girls, all from 2002 - a forever lost innocence that was perhaps never quite so innocent. In all three pictures - as in Japanese porn magazines - one sees apparently inoffensive pictures of the bare legs of very young girls. There is a deliberate ambivalence at work in the depiction of the motif, inviting the viewer to read the picture in two different ways.

In the series of pictures that Ploug shows in Seven From Afar the idiom is once again stylised and the motif a fragmentary section, but the content is quite different. The theme is weeds, and the pictures constitute a kind of tribute to wrong and unwanted existences that survive despite massive efforts to combat them. We see dandelions, thistles, cow parsnips and other ill-regarded plants that are often exposed to attempts to exterminate them. The prints, linoleum and serigraphy, are simple, ornamental and almost meditative in expression. The content of the series can be seen as a symbolic problematisation of prejudices and preconceived opinions.

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