

Let's Roll the Dice

by

Wolfgang Leidhold, Robert Rudigier – Cologne/Munich/New York

Chance has always played an important role in the arts. And chance is the source that creates light in the microcosm of quantum leaps when an electron jumps from one quantum state to another, a process happening at random. Myriads of quantum leaps create a photonic storm illuminating our Universe. The game of dice obeys the very same statistics. In rolling the dice the Dice Men link the artistic process with the cosmic power of chance. Hence the title of our show is: *Let's Roll the Dice*.

There is a long tradition of combining the process of artistic creation with the power of chance. First of all, the creative invention itself is not an event ruled by necessity or logic deduction. Mannerism is a good example for the modern cultivation of innovative ideas, the *concetto*. Tapping the sources of the personal and the collective unconscious in Dadaism and Surrealism is another one. The dice is a symbol of these methods as well as an instrument in a systematic process of creating new art-work.

For us, the systematic use of the dice opens a new way of artistic production beyond the common cleavage between abstraction and figuration by reducing or eliminating the influence of personal choice.

Basically all art is abstract. Only the degree of abstraction and its direction varies: even the most realistic photograph is abstracting from the things represented - by its two-dimensional surface, by the limited resolution and color-range of its material, by the very size of the format. No doubt, artists have abstracted from the world around them since prehistoric times. The only thing that changed was the experience of abstraction: it became an end in itself and a topic of theoretical discourse.

On the other side, all art is figurative. Only the sources of figuration vary: art may aim to imitate nature or to represent the images of the unconscious or to be 'realistic' in some other way. The artist who is adhering to the concept of *imitatio naturæ* may try to create a true picture of things but even the most 'realistic' results cannot reproduce nature authentically. Even if we focus on repressing all forms of reference in our work, we cannot escape them entirely. Abstraction is a language like any other, and carries metaphors like any other. Abstract and figurative art both do the work of representation, and in that sense are closely related.

It is pointless to juxtapose abstraction and figuration as the two radically exclusive options of art. In fact, we do not choose between them, but they are always both part of the inner balance of the artwork. Accordingly, the tension between abstraction and figuration pervades all art. The approach of the Dice Men takes a course beyond the exclusive options of either-or. But there are some precursors that we would like to honor.

One of them were the *Dadaists*, particularly Marcel Duchamp who practiced the method by his *ready mades*, when he turned *objets trouvés* like the porcelain urinal into an art-work called *Fountain* (1917). Another one was the *No-Art!-Movement* inaugurated by Boris Lurie, Sam Goodman and Stanley Fisher in New York in 1959 as a move against contemporary trends in Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art, and opposed to the popular abstraction-figuration-discourse. Based on such for-runners, the method of the Dice Men is a radical concept introducing a stochastic approach to creativity and proceeding in five consecutive operations: (1) Collecting material of any origin - (2) Arranging the material in sets - (3) Selecting material from the sets by rolling the dice - (4) Synthesising work from the material selected - (5) Working out the synthesis. At times we submit all aspects and elements of the artwork to this method, at times we restrict it to certain aspects. And at other times we invite the audience to participate in that process. Let's roll the dice!

Cologne, Munich, March 2014

The Dice Men