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On the Oslo works of Reinhold Engberding, 2001



When we came to Oslo in June, Engberding knew very little about the work of Gustav Vigeland. So, I told him, when you are in Oslo remember you are in **Vige-land**, work on it!

In the small peculiar library of the U.D.-studio in Ekely he found a book about this sculptor. And close to Ekely he could face his work in "his" park and in the museum. After a while we discovered points of touch in his and Vigelands work: the attempt of showing an own view of the cosmos, even of creating a new one and of defining life – whatever life means it happens in relationship to others; nevertheless, Engberding thinks, that whatever happens, relationship remains a trial, it is not a status.

But more than common points he felt important questions growing:

- where has intimacy gone?
- is the lack of intimacy a matter of size?
- or is the lack of intimacy a matter of material?

I told him to answer these questions.

1 - Man and woman 2001 (Come closer)

Imagine the meeting of two individuals; they see each other for the first time, imagine that.

When Engberding walks through a new city, he tries to look at people's faces, he says do not look into, it will not work. He rather tries to imagine one of the faces matching to another face he saw at a place, distant a thousand miles or more.

Since many years Engberding collects photographic portraits from the change of the last century, single men and women in their twenties up to their mid-forties, well dressed, proudly looking and sometimes a bit anxiously. He took his entire collection to Oslo.

In Norway he found some new ones. Here for the first time, he brought couples together: couples of a man and a woman, who very likely never had met during their lifetime. He became an imaginary match-maker. – Remember: The film "Chant d' amour" by Jean Genet presents us two prisoners in two cells next to each other. They get in contact by using a very small hole in the wall between their cells. They didn't manage it by facing each other but by giving something. The younger one performs himself, the older one sends the smoke of a cigarette through the hole. Both is very intimate and very precious.

- As a matter of fact, Engberding took one of the Norwegian portraits, a man or a woman and matched this one with a portrait of someone from Bern, Hamburg, Berlin or Varese.
- As a matter of shape, he cut out a circular face-part of each.
- As a matter of form, he arranged these man- and woman-circles, projected on a piece of fabric of almost golden colour (fig. 1 and 2) or a very special material (fig. 3, 4, 5).

This installation changes a bit by each breath of air, it swings like a sail and it reminds to ocean and heaven. – In both cases somehow only music has to sound with scratching in the foreground and you would imagine an old radio, an intimate light is shining through the fabric of the loudspeaker. or you would imagine a glass sphere turning around.



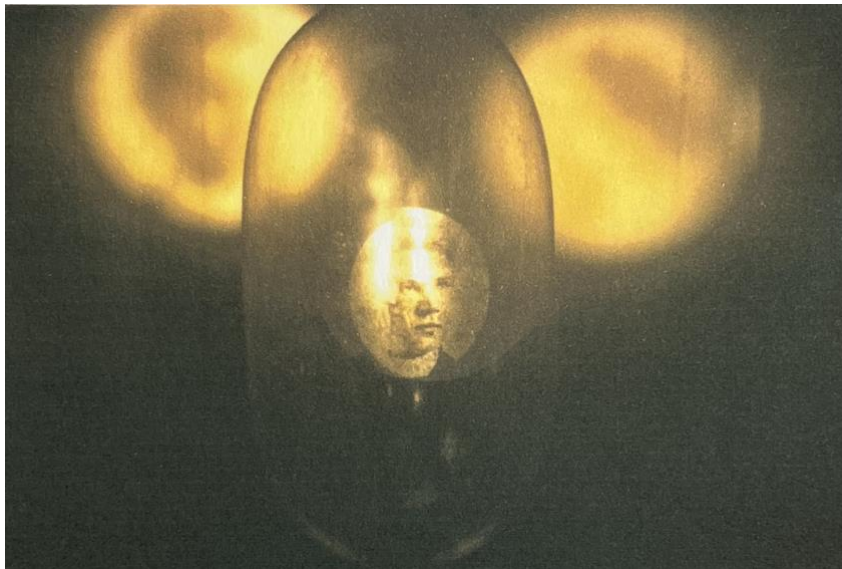
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5



6

2 – Humane Column

When Engberding comes to a new and unknown place - I know he prefers cities; to him they pretend to be the best places to conquer relationships – well, when he comes to a new city, he tries to discover it by calling on ambiguous locations. Here it mostly is dark and/or a red light is flattering and sometimes it also is humid.

Engberding recognized that here always the first step takes place. Free protection is offered to keep you alive and let you repeat and prolong the first step, whatever happens. The propulsion to go here is exactly that, nothing else. He says, that this is wonderful, childish and childlike, hell and paradise. And you can find it almost everywhere – in a way you can feel at home wherever you go.

- As a matter of fact, Engberding took the free offered protection to build this humane column.
- As a matter of form, he chose these covers, filled with water, each appearing as pulled in itself, facing us with an organic ambiguous figure
- As a matter of shape, he arranged 121 of these figures to a hanging column (fig. 6).

Engberding forced me to touch one of these figures, it is like holding a baby's heart. - This sculpture is supposed to lose itself after a couple of days, and this will happen in pieces, not all at once.

3 - Life-Circle

This wall-painting by Engberding (fig. 7) is a work about me, as he told me. It's my biography or at least a symbol of it.



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I didn't ask Engberding whether the **life-circle** is an answer to any work of Vigeland, nor do I know, whether "Mann og kvinne, 1906" is connected to **Come closer** or the "Monolith" to the **Humane column**. I think it doesn't matter.

The answers to the questions above are not given yet.

Maybe when the column is completely lost and the wind blows like storm so that the couple really meets and someone is able to read my biography, intimacy will show.

Holger B. Nidden-Grien*, Hamburg/Oslo, June/July 2001

*Engberding and I know each other very well and for a very long time. Once in a while we cooperate and two years ago, we have had our first two persons show in Berlin. Our relationship is very special. And that makes my point of view.