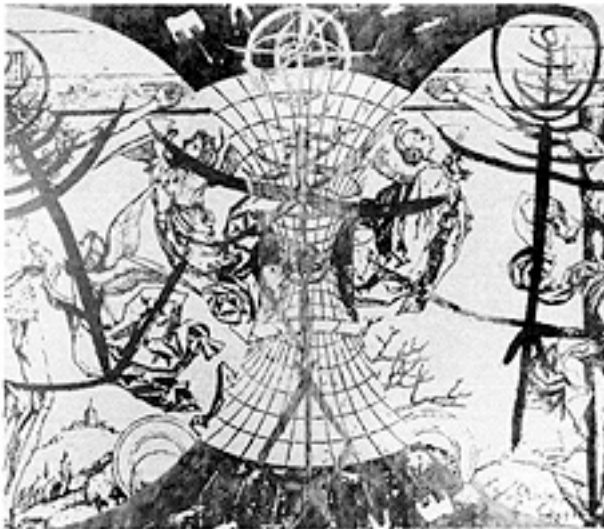


Curtis Anderson

T' VENSTER

January, 1987, by PAUL GROOT



Curtis Anderson, Untitled 1984, mixed media on canvas, ca. 61 x 71"

Perhaps it's due to the intimate atmosphere that radiates from the three floors of this gallery, perhaps it's the gallery's contrasting lighting (two spaces have direct light, the third only artificial), or maybe its architecture offers a special challenge to artists—whatever the reason, I have never seen so many religion-oriented exhibitions as I have here. Thus it was not at all surprising that American artist (and Cologne resident) Curtis Anderson took the opportunity to make a special presentation in this space, giving extra form, through architecture, to his already hermetically oriented work.

In a not always controlled though ever convincing manner—without shyness and sometimes with an overexaggerated pose—Anderson presented a self-portrait of a suffering artist inspired by divine light. Even though he did not avoid pathos, he was able

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reasonably to limit the religious bombast, bringing the Romantic topic of the suffering artist to light in a convincing manner. His neon sculptures seemed at first sight to counterbalance the overly sacramental atmosphere. But those who looked longer would see that these shapes, forms referring to his own body, also underlined the religious tone.

That this exhibition wanted above all to exist as religious theater seemed emphatically confirmed on the third floor. There the hermetic setup was like a divine comedy. Through a stigmatic hole in the ceiling, a light beam fell from a hand onto a mask of Anderson himself, which was placed in a bowl of water. Here a promise previously encountered in one of the paintings was realized: the image of Christ on the cross, the blood flooding from his hands into a chalice held by angels. Anderson figured as the mediator, the tradition-conscious artist, again liberating mankind through his suffering. Anderson's performance is sometimes a bit too pathetic to convince the most skeptical mind, but to me this overexaggerated formation was proof of his sincere attempt to send out his message in the best way possible.

Translated from the Dutch by Carollen Stikker.

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