

# flash art

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**CURTIS ANDERSON @ T Venster, Rotterdam, NL**

Review by Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen, Curator at the Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum

Curtis Anderson's mixed media installation lends itself to be interpreted as a symbolic rite of passage. This enigmatic project, pervaded by autobiographical sentiments, initially has very much the character of a private ceremony. On the other hand it does address itself to the visitor who is obliged to make an actual passage and so is involved in the rite: He or she has to climb three steps to penetrate the room in which the artist has staged his „salvation“. During this symbolic purification, executed in the three storeys of T Venster, the human body is, after exposure to trials in which the most absolute sacrifice is demanded, freed from sexual identity. Rebirth is achieved by the marriage of male and female in the androgynous personality.

In the first storey Anderson, to quote, takes „the point of view of a painter“. With a range of mostly delicate materials such as silverleaf, he has painted on four white PVC sheets a network of image fragments. These images, realized with the aid of a projector and all having a strong vertical emphasis, indicate in various ways processes of suffering. Besides a painting portraying the upside down body of the artist, there is a work with fragments of the crucifixion of Christ by Grünewald and work in which a portrayal of the Milan Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II is combined with the epitaph of Guiseppe Mengoni, the architect of the arcade, who is said to have committed suicide. In three of the paintings universal symbols, which come from Anderson's purely personal store, are incorporated. For example, in the „Grünewald“ painting the central motif symbolizes the androgyne.

The second floor is taken up completely by five neon objects which give out a clinical, hypnotic blue light. These neon tubes, shaped like hands and feet or like a cross, are fed by transformers to which the self-portrait of the artist is fixed. The part of the exhibition, with its almost tangible threat of thousands of volts, seems to point not unambiguously to the torment to which the artist once subjected his own body.

## **GALERIE BRIGITTE SCHENK**

The symbolic salvation occurs on the totally dark third floor. In the middle of this ceremonial room a white bowl stands, filled with water in which lies a pink mask and on which floats a ball slightly rubbed in with goldleaf. Around the bowl the splinters of a foetus figure have been laid out. On the mask appears the shadow of a golden metal object which hangs halfway down the room from a thin thread. It is a three-dimensional version of the androgynous symbol from the painting in the downstairs room. The object appears to rise up along the faint ray of light coming from a stigmatized hand fixed on the ceiling. Here, the cycle of death and rebirth has been completed. „The androgyne finds a pastoral wandering place.“

Curtis Anderson has, with his Rotterdam installation, established himself as an important artist. It has been a long time since I have been confronted with such an extreme and authentic presentation.

(Translated from the Dutch by Rose Berl.)