

Vittorio Brodmann
New Paintings: Vienna
May 12-June 16, 2013

When we last met, (1) Vittorio announced to me he had been selected by Migros (2) to create an image that would be printed on their grocery bags. He seemed amused and surprised by this, which made me smile, as the image I have of Vittorio when he was living in Geneva is one of a tall guy with long hair, wearing a red cap, shorts and systematically carrying around one of the afore-mentioned Migros bags.

At the time, Geneva was a bit of a bubble in a Swiss art landscape where young artists brought with them a very personal esthetic, especially due to the existence of numerous artist-run spaces. Because of its recent history and conservatism, the city maintained a kind of nostalgia, which rendered it somewhat novelty-proof. Having previously met Vittorio through mutual friends, I wondered what he had possibly come to search for at the École d'art de Genève where he had just enrolled for a year.

To be quite frank, I never saw much of him at the school, instead running into him around the local nightlife scene in states that didn't necessarily foster sophisticated theoretical debate. But was this even our desire? Slowly, Vittorio became something of a *leitmotiv* in the city. Someone finding him naked in their kitchen in the middle of the night, someone else remembering a party for high school students with a tall Swiss-German guy wearing a red cap or complaining about a particularly chaotic roommate. A colleague of mine from the school gave him a nick-name which would end up sticking: Vittorio, *L'esprit de Genève*.

In the studios of the Beaux-Arts de Genève, I once saw him receiving some frames he had ordered. They were pre-made and rather cheap looking. Vittorio had ordered about twenty of them and I couldn't help but ask him for some kind of justification. He took one of the frames under his arm and as if it were the most natural thing, explained to me he had chosen this specific format so the paintings would fit under his arm when he was carrying them around and then proceeded to mime what he had just described.

« After Ciara » (2010) consists of two videos intended to be projected together. In the videos we find Vittorio at a group show, which took place in Denmark. On one of the images Vittorio has short hair, in the other, long hair. In both cases he is applying himself to the task of repeating the choreography from a music video of the singer Ciara. The repetition of the moves on both screens highlights a certain amateurism but also a relative ease in terms of the original dance. Where the artist mimes and fails to perfectly repeat the dance moves, he nonetheless succeeds in reproducing them in spirit. As in one of his paintings in which appears the verdict « 52% rich 48% sexy », he prevents us with distinctly elegant irony from entering into a process of choice, or any interpretation that might lead us to a personal issue.

If we seldom spoke of painting with Vittorio, he did speak to me extensively about stand-up comedy, of sitcom television and cartoon strips. In fact, whether it be painting, video-performances or simply a night out on the town, Vittorio is above all a creator of situations. His posture is less that of a painter and more that of a formidable connector of elements from popular culture. Like cartoons from the New Yorker, the images he produces have that outmoded, melancholic and yet timeless atmosphere to them. His sometimes grotesque, but

Leslie | Fritz

often disillusioned and hazy characters are conjugated on the abstract surface of the canvas in skits where all action seems frozen. Interchangeable, his figures come from a relatively classic popular culture, which anyone could recognize. Their generic, non-heroic nature allows them to glide along the canvas, leaving one with a fleeting impression rather than with something to hold on to. Vittorio himself does not hesitate to qualify them as interchangeable, reinforcing the ambivalence one feels at the sight of these images, and barring us from reaching any kind of conclusion as to what it is we think we have seen.

This effect of suspension can also be found in stand-up comedy. It's the short moment of silence before the punch-line, the joke or the ellipse. It's also the moment when the comedian himself is in a state of suspension after the punch-line and during the audience's laughter (canned or live) in sitcoms. And if Vittorio has grasped these temporal subtleties and reproduces them perfectly in his paintings, the outcome is never contrived, instead settling for an elegant pose. In a different perspective, some of his images make use of very European cultural jokes stigmatizing the differences between regions or nationalities. The French or the Germans for example fit into a cliché, but voided of any unpleasant finality. We find ourselves in the temporal ambivalence of the joke, clueless, not knowing if we have arrived too late or too early. We thus experience an ironic haze and end up wondering about how we are connected to these stories.

New Paintings: Vienna is the title of this show in which canvases attempt new formats, adopting the elongated shape of a movie theater or of the iPhone screen or simply the classic format type of the gallery canvas, transforming the cliché of the art painting into a space of comedy. If the convened family of characters remains more or less the same, the background on which they appear tends to define itself more precisely in certain pieces. Upon the first paintings' abstract and colorful swirls, actual situations superimpose themselves, often bars or public places, further affirming Vittorio Brodmann's affiliation with these comedic situations.

The other day I was in Vienna for a meeting. In the car, my host turned around and asked me: « Do you happen to know Vittorio Brodmann? »

Kim Seob Boninsegni
April 2013

(1) I was a professor at the art school in Geneva from 2009 to 2012 where I met Vittorio whom I knew previously through mutual friends.

(2) The largest supermarket chain in Switzerland, they regularly organize a selection of artists to customize their paper grocery bags.

Translated from French by Beck & Gigon

Vittorio Brodmann graduated from Haute École d'Art et de Design in Geneva in 2011, and attended Zürcher Hochschule der Künste in Zurich from 2007-2010. He currently lives and works in Vienna. Recent solo exhibitions include Galerie Gregor Staiger in Zurich, Graff Mounge d'Algue in Geneva, and New Jerseyy in Basel. Brodmann's work has also been included in group exhibitions at Kunstalle Bern, Renwick Gallery, New York, COCO, Vienna, Prague Biennale 5, Prague, Kunsthaus Glarus, Sandy Brown, Berlin, CEO Gallery, Malmö, 1m3, Lausanne and Karma International, Zurich. He has had recent performances at Dingum, Berlin, Halle für Kunst, Lüneburg, Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen. This is his first solo show in New York.