

# Galerie Francesca Pia

**Kaspar Müller**

*Vergiss all die Emails und Sms...*

**Opening Thursday, November 7, 6–9 pm**

**November 8, 2024 – January 18, 2025**

Adalbert Rogge apparently moved from Silesia to Berlin around 1880, already known for his impressionistic style, focusing on atmospheric beach scenes, landscapes, and figures. By around 1884, Rogge, an artist who is now considered relatively insignificant from an art historical perspective, had already become an academically acclaimed painter, known for his faithful depictions of genre scenes.

When I found his painting offered for free in the street last autumn, it was in the very same place where the replica was painted and signed by Adalbert Rogge in 1888, and also, in the same city, where the original painting of *Malle Babbe* by Frans Hals hung and still hangs in one of Germany's most acclaimed institutions, the Alte Nationalgalerie. A weird spatiotemporal element given all the historic rubble and time passed. It intrigued me for its possible exploration of emotional and historical layers unfolding second and third degrees around the inherent theme of the abject, and I took it home stealthily, as if plotting a sinister plan. It was after a Halloween party with our kids in Keithstrasse in Schöneberg, and though dark and rainy, it had popped to my eye as it had a note on it, not just saying it was „for free“, but with the implicit, Berlin typical, tentative reading „if you like it, you can take it“. I didn't want to look closely, for in the darkness, I recognized the outlines of what I believed I could see, and her laughter defied further categorization.

The place of finding and the circumstances are as dim as its history as a once-brilliant street of renowned antique dealers. Opposed to these notions of abandonment, just until the weekend before our opening, the Berliner Gemäldegalerie is hosting a special exhibition featuring ten works by Frans Hals, including its centerpiece, *Malle Babbe*, returning after travelling from the National Gallery in London and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Beyond painting as a discipline, beyond the values of original and reproduction, beyond the theme of the sublime and the abject, I envision figurative representation and artistic abstraction as a fluid manifestation of the circumstances and friction through its history of appropriations; questioning the demarcation of artificiality and authenticity through mimicry and recombination, entering a realm of interaction akin to the discussion about artificial and natural intelligence.

For now the findling, our patient, is suspended; exposed and tensioned as an exempt layer of the programming, strapped between the supporting columns of the gallery with rubber bands. A group of scientific-looking colorful figures with eccentric neck braces has gathered around – a twisted, historically male gaze lies on the object. But who is really looking at whom here? Who is having the last laugh? Who will testify to the veracity of the story if the patient is dead?

As much as the 12 apostles are stripped of the fabric of their history, they remain faithful to their shapes, serving us as historical, signaletic, and further emotional, olfactory (dis-)orientation – still, here is a feeling of a (possibly digital) glitch in the stacked layers, a dissolution of power structures.

Today I try to imagine how Adalbert Rogge had gone to the Alte Nationalgalerie, where the original painting by Frans Hals is exhibited, and he went and sat down in front of it to copy it. We can only speculate about whether his intentions were technical, historical or in some sense spiritual.

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As I continue reading on the museum's website, I learn that laughter and smiles are key elements in the exhibition. Indeed, this doubling (and further multiplication) of the portrait with its scoffing title *Malle Babbe* reminds me of Henri Bergson's notion of laughter as a disruption of formal language, where a mechanical, destabilizing aspect of humor is explored (through repetition). They both laugh. All of them laugh.

Evoking behavioral therapy and medication, reducing the subject to a mechanical response unit, or, as a source of dark humor (Bergson), the deeper psychic life unfolds through processes of healing that require immersion into the semiotic realm of pre-language and unconscious processes that transcend symptoms, akin to psychoanalysis, here and there broken up through a laughter that appears to stand in need of an echo. Listen to it carefully: it is not an articulate, clear, well-defined sound; it is something which would fain be prolonged by reverberating from one to another, something that begins with a crash, to continue in successive rumblings, like thunder in a mountain.

I inhale the toxic steam only from a distance. Millions of years old fossils, liquified and hardened into recognizable basic geometric shapes of different sizes, these polymerization processes, where small molecules chemically bond to form larger structures from the reaction of dicarboxylic acids and polyols, provide me with a spatial comfort in this moment of exploitation. I see the colors turn deep and opaque, then again transparent, their familiar geometric shapes soothe me more than my pharmaceutical collection as my migraine is killing me. It's vestibular. What a confinement, that's the real crisis of geometry! I get a bit scared as the ground moves and I seem to turn. With the help of artificial intelligence, every artist can unleash their own propaganda machine, though, „who knows the beginning and who knows the end“ as Blinky Palermo said, but he didn't say much. How, again, the matte surfaces swallow the light and slow the speed of its polished, glossy, reflective edges, this sensation of the colors, and the scents, ah, the hormones and neurotransmitters... this liminal space, between the structures of meaning and the bodily forces that destabilize those structures, has never felt as existential as in this moment of exhaustion. From a distance I engage with the symbolic order, destabilized but still carrying the weight of history, as I approach, it pulls me away and into a more personal, primal experience.

Rather than seeking to eliminate friction, I emphasize the importance of embracing it to better comprehend the intricate interdependencies that shape our world, emphasizing the role of the psyche and the circumstances in the creative process and how artistic works serve as a medium, engaging with a notion of intertextuality and appropriation, reflecting the fluidity of meaning and the ability of art to communicate across diverse contexts, highlighting both conflict and collaboration. Friction is not a byproduct of these often obscured interactions and processes in art; it is the fundamental source itself – perhaps the very source of meaning and creativity – through which we overcome the paralyzing confrontation of the death drive and regression, by integrating it in the process.

Now close your eyes and find the pizza. Over there is the horse stable, there's a car, and at another spot, the grass has been cut. We move with our eyes closed toward the chamomile tea, the melatonin makes us drowsy, caffeine wakes us up again, collapsing the distance.

Adalbert Rogge was a German painter born on October 11, 1861, in Świebodzin, Poland, and he passed away in 1920 in Berlin. While specific biographic details are vague, some of his works are recognized in the art auction market.

– Kaspar Müller, October 2024