

(Text for the exhibition in United Art Museum, Wuhan, China, February March 2019)

“something behind”

Most things we see are opaque, we can see just the surfaces but not the inside, the hidden elements and structures. However, in everyday-life, our assumptions about the hidden parts are most times correct, because of our experiences with the with things around. We can recognize a school building as a school building and our assumptions about its functions, its structures and about what is happening inside will be more or less correct.

As a foreigner in China (also in Korea) I see many things, which attract my attention. But since I am not accustomed and I can't even read, my understanding is limited. However, I try to interpret the things I see also beyond bare visual appearance and that is stimulating and challenging my imagination. I am aware that often, my hypotheses about the functions, structures and intentions of what I see, stays speculative.

It is interesting, for me as artist, to deal with that ambiguity in my paintings and to show details and objects and buildings without that I exactly know about their backgrounds, functions, intentions and ideas.

When looking at a painting, the spectator just sees an opaque surface. In case of my paintings he can probably recognize the depicted motives, but the artworks meaning, intentions, ideas and concepts, cannot be seen, – they can just be assumed. Those invisible but essential elements of art, appear in the artwork just indirect and keep therefore a certain ambiguity.

The artistic process is very complex, because it comprises the rational, conscious principles and concepts the same as the aesthetic, psychological, non-rational and sensual elements. It is a chain of decisions about themes, motives, formats, material, techniques, references, expression-forms, compositions, colors, nuances and structures, and many of those decisions are beyond the threshold of consciousness.

Even for the artists themselves, their work contains some aspects and elements they could never explain. After all, it is this openness, the “secret of art”, which attracts people, because artworks invite to expand experience and imagination, they arouse questions without ultimate answers; because there is always something behind.

Ingo Baumgarten