

Elke Denda

Das Kunstwerk, Kunstszenen Düsseldorf, January 1989

By Julian Heynen

Elke Denda's handling of the ornamental, as it should better be called, follows its own rules. Her pictures are not related to any particular place, they are a world of images in their own right. The reflection of abstract art through repetition is not her thing. But jumping back and forth across the border between art and design is not the subject either.

She works a little with the oscillation of decorative form and symbol, but the pictures are nowhere ironic or even polemical against themselves. On the whole, the patterns seem completely free, independent and invented for this one pictorial use. This is not so much because of familiarity with very specific visual standards, but because these images manage to appeal to emotional layers in the viewer.

They are moments that recall a first experience of very specific images in one's own life. But as much as Elke Denda's pictures contain very personal signs and symbols, their integration into ornamentation gives them the chance to be understood. The ornament as a carrier of meaning, never unambiguous, but iridescent, but precisely for this reason a form of communication for many.

Pictures that try to express very simple things. The suspicion of naivety is in the air. But what does that mean beyond simple vituperation? Can it be naive in a bad sense when an artist succeeds in creating images with the help of ornamentation that find support in themselves and at the same time formulate a supra-individual moment of life? I hardly think so. But it can't be naïve in a well-intentioned sense either, when a pictorial form has been found that uses the anonymous in a tricky way to make the individual communicable as the collective. These images are not exotic or spun in themselves, they are merely stubborn attempts to reach beyond speechlessness.