

Veronika Pahl, Bonn, 1993

Extract from the laudatio on the award of the DAG (Employees' Trade Union) Art Prize.

Looking at Winfried Wolk's early graphic works and paintings rapidly causes any arrogant doubt about whether these are really an enrichment of life to vanish. The masterly technique of his etchings, whether in the aquatinta series on the Psalms of Ernesto Cardenal or the Icarus sequence, proves how very much the reality itself is used to convey the messages.

The graphic works and paintings are also proof of the supposition that the fine arts in the GDR had the function of disseminating information and the meaning of events, one rightly meanwhile taken over by the media, which should be left to them so that the fine arts can withdraw

Winfried Wolk's more recent works, and especially those awarded prizes, demonstrate his retreat from political interpretation, yet even these contain messages. Nevertheless, these are no longer shaped by the artist alone, but are created in a work-viewer-artist triangle. The consensus between painter and viewer only occurs at the moment of viewing and is subject to changing time and fashions. The unchangeability of the picture faces the wantonness of interpretation by persons viewing it. It is only the emotional tie that unfolds the work of art for the onlooker. The recent works simplify this process between the picture, the viewer and the artist.

The new lightness and colourfulness of the paintings intoxicate not just those looking at them but also the artist himself. Enthusiasm for the new fascination with paint and surface, which also for the first time remains a surface, is transferred to exhibition visitors, while the freshness of expression captivates us. Winfried Wolk knows how to produce tension, even also in the sub-titling of his works. He thus incorporates the qualities that he used as a graphic artist in that he added in little aphorisms or verbal definitions of the situation as elements to some extent of the graphics. They were only seldom diminished but in most cases irony only deepened the multiplicity of meanings.

It is precisely there that we recognize the hinge on which our prize-giving ceremony rests, namely to set signals for the support of works of art that are put on display, formulate rules and at the same time conflict with these, describe reality while in parallel distorting it, unravel outer appearance as well as clouding it, which both create and rebel against models.