

ARTIST PORTRAIT | ENGLISH

Ulrike Guggenberger: Conversation with Maks Dannecker. Salzburg, 2012

*“The nature of man is art”
(Johann Gottfried Herder)*

Maks’ artistic creativity evolved processually, unhurriedly.

By training she is a photographer. Over the years she honed her craft until she could master every situation. To this day, one source of her commissions is the precious metal sector: the promotional presentation of gold and silver coins, as well as products such as gold bars, money stamps, money counting machines and lock boxes, for example, is her daily bread.

As her basic knowledge grew, an interest in the background to her work, as well, set in as if by itself. From shots of objects, she progresses to architectural shots of the big companies and precious metal dealers, writes Internet publications, specialist blogs about valuable metals and precious metal products, and pushes forward to the story of her subject matter: gold. A value that, to this day, has not lost its glister. Gold and money, tied closely to human activity since time immemorial, peak in the desire to be able to produce money oneself. Tales of unsuccessful alchemists haunt the entire Medieval age. Still, today, gold bars are buried in secret places for fear of their being lost. Still, the search is on to enhance money’s value through gold. For some, an unknown world – Maks is able to document it and speaks, in the process, of contemporary alchemists.

Consciously or unconsciously – Maks begins to search for her own treasures and values. Searches for cross-connections between inner and outer world, in order to bring life and work into relation. Increasingly, her private photography develops a life of its own. Maks classifies exhibition visits as exploration, is (mostly) unsatisfied with what she sees, and sets off on the way herself. Increasingly clearly, she becomes aware of how much she needs the reduced, silent, minimalistic aesthetic of her personal “unblemished world”, how she feels safe in it. “I do not yell with my art,” she says. With scanty artistic resources, by emphasizing, withholding, sneaking in foreign bodies, shapes, and paint particles, she tells background stories. On the same sheet, comparable with layers of recognition, one story transitions into another, an inexhaustible process of interpreting. Fragments from her professional and private everyday flare up during her work, sink, and emerge again in her works as autonomous picture elements. “To me, making art means creating a fictitious world.” No postulates, no world-improving fantasies, Maks is looking to broaden perception. Research and basic knowledge are always presupposed. And Maks loves Old Testament stories, discovers a personal value in interpreting old writings for today’s times. Her artistic, photographic translation is based on a very wayward language of signs, expresses itself via her spiritual dealing with light. Her professional environment always plays an integral part. In all situations she upholds a high aesthetic claim, both for her applied and her free art. “I won’t allow my motifs to be banal, I want the unusual,” Maks demands of herself. Her expectation of her works’ beholder is serious confrontation with the visual contents of her artistic photography.

Ulrike Guggenberger

About the author: **Mag. Ulrike Guggenberger** studied art history at the University of Salzburg. Founding member of the art initiative KNIE. Projects on art in the public space, freelance journalist, and art educator at the Museum der Moderne, Salzburg.

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