

## A Serene Fundamental How of Living

As with all good art, encountering the bronze sculptures of Andrea Matheisen begins with a sense of confusion. They look a bit like those of Giacometti, but entirely different. Something is not quite right. The arms are too long, the necks and legs are too big. Or is it that the upper body is too short, the head too small? We do not know. We wonder. We are amazed.

This sense of wonder is our reaction to a sculpture that draws our attention and addresses us. It almost seems as if it was not us looking at the statue and the statue looking back at us, but as though the statue had looked first and we only returned a gaze which had already rested on us – as if it had been waiting for us.

The figure confronts us like an interlocutor in a dialogue. Relative to us, it takes an elevated position. For we can only turn the elongated extremities into a consistent overall impression, if we look at the figure as if it was given to us in a low angle perspective.

By thus looking up at the figure its mannerism appears to be something positive since its disproportionality does not seem like a preponderance of form over content, as has often been deplored,<sup>1</sup> but like a determination of the sculpture by its content: it is fundamentally oriented towards a viewer. That is expressed by its manner.

In this relation to us the figures appear light and nimble. They lack the statuesque rigidity and compactness. Instead they exhibit a free bodily rhythm and playful agility. They come across as nonchalant and cheerful. Therefore the formal disproportion of their gestalt does not mirror a psychological incongruity of character – such as the “lack of a home, insecurity about the world and the precariousness of existence” often ascribed to the person with mannerisms,<sup>2</sup> – but its opposite: a down-to-earth attitude, zest for life and optimism – a serene “fundamental how of living”.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gerhard Regn, “Manierismus: Kritik eines Stilbegriffs”, in: Bernhard Huss, Christian Wehr (ed.), *Manierismus. Interdisziplinäre Studien zu einem ästhetischen Stiltyp zwischen formalem Experiment und historischer Signifikanz*, Heidelberg 2014, pp. 19-46.

<sup>2</sup> Ludwig Binswanger, *Drei Formen des missglückten Daseins. Verstiegtheit, Verschrobenheit, Manieriertheit*. *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 1, Heidelberg 1956, p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> Translated from Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles*. *Gesamtausgabe*, II. Abteilung: Vorlesungen, vol. 61, 2. revised edition 1994, p. 80 (Vorlesung Wintersemester 1921/22).