

Art: Simon Raab shocks in the Zimmermann gallery.

Between reality, chaos and deception

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No, we are not used to something like this, especially not in Peter Zimmermann's noble gallery, where until now, with names like Kuno Gonschior, Rolf-Gunther Dienst or Johannes Gecelli, things used to be highly serious after all. Suddenly the landlord has orientated himself to California and invested great engagement to get a work group of Simon Raab, an artist rather unknown over here, to Mannheim: The so-called "Parleau" – these are mind-blowing indeed.

The walls glisten with crumpled metal and shrill colors and on top of that distorted faces are protruding out of the crumble. What are we supposed to make of this? To begin with: Simon Raab was born in Toulouse, his father was from Czechoslovakia, the mother from Luxembourg, while he grew up in Canada and did his physics studies in the USA. Zimmermann hints that Raab processes influences by trash producer Jeff Koons as well as by sculptor John Chamberlain. But most of all, he seeks the intermediate zone between figure and abstraction, reality and deception, esthetics and chaos.

As seen through water

The work group of the "Parleau" suggests the distortion of visible, apparently certain things through water waves: "par l'eau", and the work process functions in such way that Raab paints an aluminum and stainless steel sheet with semi-transparent colors, heats it, crumbles it and forms it over different styles of wood frame. This way, images emerge which are reliefs at the same time and seem to sprawl beyond the frame.

Raab applies the physical cognition that we have to doubt everything that seems to be easily perceptible in art. A noble aspiration. But it makes us gulp first that the results are so American and so garish. Rugged minds might get used to it...