



Vilhelm Hammershøi und die Magie des Alltags

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My research project deals with the monochrome interior scenes of the Danish painter Vilhelm Hammershøi (1864-1916), which are characterized by a pictorial tension between subjects taken from everyday life and their technical stylization. On the one hand Hammershøi's silent interiors and their female inhabitants clearly refer to traditional Dutch and Danish interior painting. On the other hand this reference is undermined by the painter's diffuse and monochromatic pictorial language, which creates a gap between the image space and the viewer. The monochrome interiors of the Danish painter, Vilhelm Hammershøi (1864-1916), are unique in that they intermingle cool realism with appealing sensuality.

My project focuses on the strange solitude of Hammershøi's female figures and the disquieting emptiness of his rooms. The isolation of his female figures, seen from behind, becomes almost tangible because of their striking detachment from the spatial surroundings, which themselves lack all trace of human activity. In addition the unifying treatment of both space and figure leads one to question the role of the figure itself and its capacity to inhabit and thus animate a private room. The painter's diffuse technical treatment of the picture plane stresses the thesis of an increased independence of the calm motifs from the vibrant way in which they are depicted. Standing at the threshold of the inner and the outer world, Hammershøi's female figures mark the fluid transgression between the body and the surrounding space as well as the pictures' ambivalence between spatial illusion and technical disillusion. Moreover, the artist's vibrant style and subtle use of luminous colour penetrate the depicted space with a sublime feeling of both introspection and liveliness.

My research is based on the assumption of a new visualisation of inwardness, which becomes independent of the motif and shifts onto the technical level of painting. Taking the tradition of interior painting as well as contemporary photography into account, the dissertation, which takes an interdisciplinary approach to the material, aims to show that Hammershøi developed new modes of visualising inwardness which affects the relationship of space and figure, similarly to the relationship of the painting and the viewer. My main argument is that Hammershøi's paintings must be understood in the context of a new aestheticism of inwardness, which became more and more independent from the depicted motif by unfolding itself on the pictorial surface of the painting. My dissertation will elucidate the extent to which Hammershøi's technique functions as the predominant morpheme of his paintings, and will in turn explore questions of their mediality and materiality.