

Dr. Paul Wember, Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld.

The Void — Its content and reproduction

THOUGHTS ON YVES KLEIN AND CHARLES WILP

All the artistic actions of Yves Klein form a coherent unity and all lead to the direct expression of freedom and to the direct comprehension of spiritual perfection. It is thus in connection with his multifarious activities that one can appreciate his struggle with the problem of "The Void". Whether he was conceiving the "Monochromie", the "Anthropometrie", the "Symphonie Monotone", the "Cosmogénies", the "Plantentary Reliefs", the "Cheque Books" or the "Theatre of the Void" the aim is always the existence of the thing and never its history. In order to grasp the condition of being that exists for example in the "Monochromie", the concept of "unknown sensibility" arises almost unnoticed. This "unknown sensibility" thus becomes the key thought of all activity. "For me the art of painting consists in the creation of freedom". "To comprehend the soul without having to describe it . . . that is the objective".

Experience has shown that the much used concept of sensibility has caused much difficulty for people and especially for intellectuals. Yves usage of the word arose in that he found the word "soul" debased though over use and he thus substituted for it expressions like "human sensibility", or "cosmic sensibility" sometimes even "pure energy". But there can be no doubt that when Yves spoke of "sensibility" he meant the "soul". That is the meaning of the search for the complete value of an "Image", the search for the invisible values within each of his many artistic aims. This striving goes parallel to that which in traditional forms of painting we call "the artistic".

These qualitative concepts always concern themselves with the immaterial. Yves Klein wished to make real the atmosphere which is manifested in the painting; the sensibilised climate, a condition which can be felt, but not grasped, made visible and an experience. In this way in fact the condition of the "void", the empty space is clearly defined. The human and cosmic sensibility of empty space is invisible to the eye, but at the same time can be felt as present by all sensitive forces. We call a person sensitive, when he can appreciate invisible values. He becomes the medium for the communication of experience. Sensibility in a void is the ability to receive experience and impressions. Of course with "experience", feeling in its widest sense is of crucial importance. But even feeling is merely one part of sensitive perception. The experience of the quality of the content of a void is "white", but it is also intensive, unending and enduring. It was really Yves greatest ambition to reach this now often mentioned goal without painting. In a void, which he painted completely white in the manner of his monochrome paintings, he wished to reach the state, out of which a human sensibility could arise, which could make manifest the real freedom of mankind. He identified this freedom as the Life Force which is meant to appreciate the fact of existence without reference to the object. He believed that he reached this state in the void; he saw this as a method to transform the world. Basically what he does is very simple. He wished to have such an effect on the creation of space that its sensibility becomes almost touchable, that a particularly sensitive life force in a man becomes noticeable when he enters such a space. In the same way as his monochrome paintings develop and communicate spiritual qualities, so the void communicates his conception of the content of space. The void is in the first instance a nothingness which needs to be dramatically produced, but which also contains a wealth of content which impinge upon the sensitive man who enters and which affect him as soon as he opens his mind to the experience. These contents communicate and assert themselves. The observer or better still the visitor becomes again the medium of sensibility. Here it is necessary to know that Yves considered himself the author of this sensibility. Was this claim justified? From the point of view of meaning, the immaterial image of empty space is of course nothing at all: in the sense that it has been dramatised by Yves so that it can work its full effect on people, the claim is surely valid. For "The Void" which in all its richness approaches people, would achieve nothing without Yves' definition. It is surely something very special, this ever heightened impression of space for the man who enters the area. In front of one there is nothing to be felt, not even with the hand, yet one consciously occupies another world within a sensitised space, in which we experience existence in terms of a relationship to it, a wholly new form of reacting. In the radiation of the filled void towards one, one lays oneself wide open, for some a peaceful experience, for others disquieting, but for all within the white void it is alive and full of air.

Yves Klein realised a number of these white empty voids, for instance in Paris, in Krefeld in 1961, in a room in the Museum Haus Lange which still exists. Charles Wilp managed to hold forever these phenomena with his brilliant photographs. In these almost intangible phenomena, for instance the Krefeld void he managed with Yves Klein himself, within the space to capture its reality — from the sharply defined white void through an ever more weakly accentuated void to an unending space in which architectonic contours are barely perceptible. In this way Wilp realised Yves intentions to the best. For Wilp also found himself in a truly immaterial space without architectonic boundaries. So in the same way as Yves with his cheque books in the manner of gold ingots sold "blue sensibility", or communicated the existence of the "theatre of the void" through the pages of the newspaper "Dimanche" through blue pigment communicated human freedom, through the triptych "Blue-Red-Gold" the values of the spiritual, the spirit world, and the highest of all, the godly, so he also left the immaterial sensibilised space to one who was prepared to accept it and also who would appreciate Yves' meaning of the void. Such a ready friend was Charles Wilp who as "Prince de l'Espace" received from Yves the gift of unending void. This void then Wilp sought to hold fast with the aid of a camera. It was through the impulses of Yves that Wilp created the photos of the void which in reality capture unending space in the sense that Yves did in his blue monochrome, "the Mediterranean by Nice", which was for Yves his greatest painting. Wilp's secret, comparable with the embodiment of the void in the white space, is the holding fast of unending void, a nothingness in the Cosmos, with differentiating horizons and boundaries. Now, but with great ambition would it be possible to approach Yves speculative ideas? There remains the question as to whether Wilp has realised this ambition. Here the writer believes it is possible to maintain that the immaterial, the filling of eternity is an always reachable goal. This eternity becomes visible for the viewer in different intensities, in different sensitivities, depending on whether the horizons of the photo are apparent in the centre or at the top or bottom. It thus becomes possible to experience eternity through Yves Klein's sensibilised zones precisely in the ever stronger realisation that in the cosmic sensibility there exists no middle, no above or below. The middle is everywhere, above and below are recognisable human perceptions, but here they are dispensed with to be replaced the unrealisable, with just that unendingness of the sensibilised space, which was made real by Yves. Also here he is the author of sensibility. This cosmic sensibility of the unending, immaterial space, Charles Wilp captures in his photographs.

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— HOMMAGE TO THE VOID —

BY

CHARLES WILP

ICA

LONDON MAY 1974

CHARLES WILP – DÜSSELDORF/LONDON

1950

Studies psychology, journalism and music in Aachen, Germany and France.

1953

Co-operation with the architect **OSCAR NIEMEYER** in Rio de Janeiro on the project **BRASILIA**.

Collaboration with **GEORGES MATHIEU** in Paris.

The photographic cycle **DIE ENTFÜHRUNG HEINRICH IV. AUS DER KAISERPFALZ ZU KAISERSWERTH DURCH DEN ERZBISCHOF ANNO ZU KÖLN**

CERCLE DE SIGER DE BRABANT together with Norbert Wiener, Prince Igor Troubetzkoy, Gabriel Roumergue and Georges Mathieu.

1954

Discovers his **SPECTRAL-GEOGRAPHIC HORIZON** in photographic space.

Writes his poem **LET'S GO INTO SPACE**.

First **PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE VOID** during his collaboration with **YVES KLEIN** and **JEAN TINGUELY**.

1958

First exhibition of the **PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE VOID** at **IRIS CLERT**, Paris.

Joins the group of **NOUVEAU REALISM** artists as a film maker.

1959

Exhibition of Photographs of the Void at **MICRO SALON IRIS CLERT** in New York and Tokyo together with works of **YVES KLEIN**, **TINGUELY**, **ARMAND**, **SOTO** and **FONTANA**.

1960

With **GENERAL MOSHE DAYAN**, Ecole de Guerre, **WERNER RUHNAU**, Air Architecture, he joins the **CENTER OF SENSIBILITY, ARIZONA**, as Professor for Photography and Television. **LE DEPLACEMENT DE L'ART PROBLEMATIQUE**, by **YVES KLEIN**.

1961

Shortly before his death, **YVES LE MONOCHROME** leaves him 77777 **CUBIC METER OF ENDLESS SENSIBILIZED PURE SPACE** and gives him the title **PRINCE DE L'ESPACE**.

1962

Film on **CHRISTO** made in London: **PACKAGE OF A NUDE WOMAN**.

Film on **JEAN TINGUELY** while flying low over German cities throwing 75,000 copies of **TINGUELY'S MANIFEST OF STATICS**.

1963

Film on Armand's **WHITE ORCHID**: a car exploded by dynamite while Charles Wilp and Armand performed the **SONG OF THE DYNAMITEROS**.

1964

Film on Fontana's **CONCETTO SPAZIALE** in Milan.

Reads with Fontana the **MANIFESTO BIANCO**, poem for two voices.

1965

Meets **ANDY WARHOL**. Starts making advertising photography using **POP ART** concepts. Receives both the gold and silver medal, the **HIGHEST AWARDS OF AMERICAN ADVERTISING** and the **RIZZOLI PRICE** for Volkswagen ads.

1967

Dispute with the Cologne police in favour of an art exhibition by the pop artist **MEL RAMOS**.

1970

Book of Pop portraits of West-German Cabinet Ministers, including **WILLY BRANDT**.

Guest lecturer at **NAIROBI UNIVERSITY**. Psychological Creativity.

1972

DOCUMENTA V, Kassel. Together with American **NEW REALISM** a **ONE-MAN-SHOW OF CONSUMER REALISM**.

Exhibition of political portraits in Bonn.

Personal secundant of **JOSEF BEUYS** in boxfight for democracy on **DOCUMENTA V**.

1973

Stage design and music score for his **CONSUMER'S OPERA** at the **XX OLYMPIC GAMES AT MUNICH**.

1974

Hospital experiment with "Void Photographs" under scientific control of **DR. SCHULZ** and **DR. VON CRAMON** of Max Planck Institute, Munich.

HOMMAGE TO THE VOID. Exhibition of the Photographs of the Void at the **INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS, LONDON**.

Cooperation with **TREVOR BELL** in future spectroscopic color pigment research.

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URSULA NIGGEMANN

GESELLSCHAFT FÜR UMWELTGESTALTUNG

Reflections on the Photographs of the Void

"Even though the tree seeks rest the wind will not lie still" (Mao)

The potential needs of our society have occasioned industrial situations and demands whose needs can only be fulfilled through an unbroken **STREAM OF PRODUCTION**.

Through the constant manufacture of superfluous objects, the free development of man's own needs and environment is repressed as he is forced into the **CYCLE OF THE PRODUCER-CONSUMER**.

Our society, whose greatest achievement has been the constant repression of social change has become irrational in its ways. Our belief in the **POWER OF TECHNOLOGY** and reluctance to accept given **NATURAL BOUNDARIES** and to live within them, today has brought mankind to a turning point at which the question arises as to whether he can possibly **SURVIVE** as a biological species.

The cost of unlimited material growth has been a reduction in the **QUALITY OF LIFE**, has led to the chaos, criminality, poverty and the frustration which rule our cities. The majority of these human problems cannot anymore be solved by technical solutions.

Only a general change in the total structure of society, accompanied by **NEW THOUGHT PROCESSES** and a proper assessment of the **AIMS OF MANKIND**, its **VALUES AND MORAL IDEAS** can set free the forces which are necessary for integrating a **NEW CONSCIOUSNESS**.

Natural man will one day soon **LONG FOR RELEASE** from this excess and will want to become poor again.

Poverty will once again become the natural, the only real **CONDITION OF MANKIND**. **THIS POVERTY** in which only the necessities which man needs in order to be human will **DEFINE HIS NATURAL LIMITS**. A poverty which in total contrast to affluence will define man's humanity. A poverty that will **SET FREE**, that will **LIGHTEN BURDENS** and **RETURN TO PROPER HORIZONS**.

Everything **MATERIAL CAN DISAPPEAR** from one day to the next. However, the **SHADOWS OF HIROSHIMA** are witness to a survival in an **UNENDING SPACE**.

Before us lies the **FIRST STEP OF THE NEW CONSCIOUSNESS**. New, as yet uncomprehended **POWER OF THE SPIRIT AND THE SOUL** will be released. The aura of man will be made visible and with Psi signals will be released into space.

A universe which knows neither North or South, West or East waits for its moment of realisation. A **CHANGE OF CONSCIOUSNESS** can only be achieved through the creation of **NEW SENSIBILITIES**. We must regain for ourselves the original condition of space: **THE HORIZON AS THE POINT OF ORIENTATION** and the **COMMON BASIS FOR DISCOVERING THE NEW VISION** with which we can then **APPRECIATE OUR ENVIRONMENT AND RE-CREATE IT ANEW**.

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MEADOWS: THE LIMITS OF GROWTH
ARTHUR FORD: LIFE BEYOND DEATH
ORLANDER: PSI
MERLEAU PONTI: NEW BEGINNING