

■ ANTHROPOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Germany: The Gerhard Reisch Foundation

Stirring the imagination

Gerhard Reisch (1899-1975) left behind an oeuvre that might only unfold its full potential in the future. The Gerhard Reisch Foundation has reprinted (with commentary) the portfolio 'From the world of elemental beings', first published in a pioneering act in 1967.



Evoking distant childhood memories: two gnomes by Gerhard Reisch

Looking briefly at one of the thirty-six A4 pictures I think: naïve children's book illustration. Does this interest me? Can it really touch me? I have to force myself at first to turn the page. Having taken the time to look at all the pictures I find that my mood has changed: from critical, censorious intellectuality to a feeling that evokes a distant childhood memory. A sense of magic and yearning beauty emerges that reveals itself in the natural world. Looking at the pictures I have become all calm inside. How can that be?

The heart centre in the soul

I look more closely at the painting titled 'Two gnomes with blue flower': two ragged brown creatures gaze at me: the one on the right seems serious, almost sad. He gently leans with one hand on a mound that has been opened to reveal several shining yellow and pink crystals. Next to them, in the

middle of the mound and leading to the centre of the painting, grows a flower with three blossoms: a warm, yearningly inward blue on the outside and white and pink inside. The flower appears to me like an image of the heart centre in the soul. The gnome on the left places one hand on his heart. He smiles at me, his gaze mild and wise. Both gnomes look as if they were posing for a photograph which lends a humorous touch to the scene, while a certain earnestness is retained.

On the back of the picture Reisch explains his motif: These two ancient, wise gnomes have come to have their portrait taken. They are still invisible to our eyes; their etheric form only appears to the selfless who know to be silent and who possess high spiritual life substance. [...] Their shape varies immensely [...].

The other drawings in the portfolio show more elemental be-

ings: salamanders, sylphs, undines, but also mountain spirits and sublime angelic beings.

The picture as the outcome of a process

'Matterhorn' pictures the dynamic interplay of essential formative forces under the guidance of higher spiritual entities. A poem by Reisch on the back of the drawing – all descriptions on the back appear in German and English – echoes the sublime mood. The booklet that goes with the portfolio contains a brief biography of Reisch and an essay he wrote to explain the background of his pictures. The artist, who trained at Wrocław art school, asks about the purpose of art. There would be no art in simply copying imaginations as one copies a part of nature. We must observe the following: we have, on the one hand, the result of working with colour, the revelations of the essence of red, blue and so on. On the other hand we stop short of presenting an imagination and rather catch it in the status nascendi, directing the formative forces into the use of colour. The picture emerges between the two.'

Reisch's assertion in the preface that he does not want his drawings to be seen as pieces of art but as sketches comes as a surprise. Because the motifs are drawn from the realm of the formative forces, Reisch thought that they might inspire imaginations in the soul of the observer. The process of bringing human and elemental beings together seems to have been important for Reisch. By reprinting the portfolio and organizing a symposium, the Gerhard Reisch Foundation intends to keep this endeavour alive. | Cornelia Friedrich

Information:

www.gerhardreisch.com

Symposium and seminars:

15 to 19 Oktober 2012