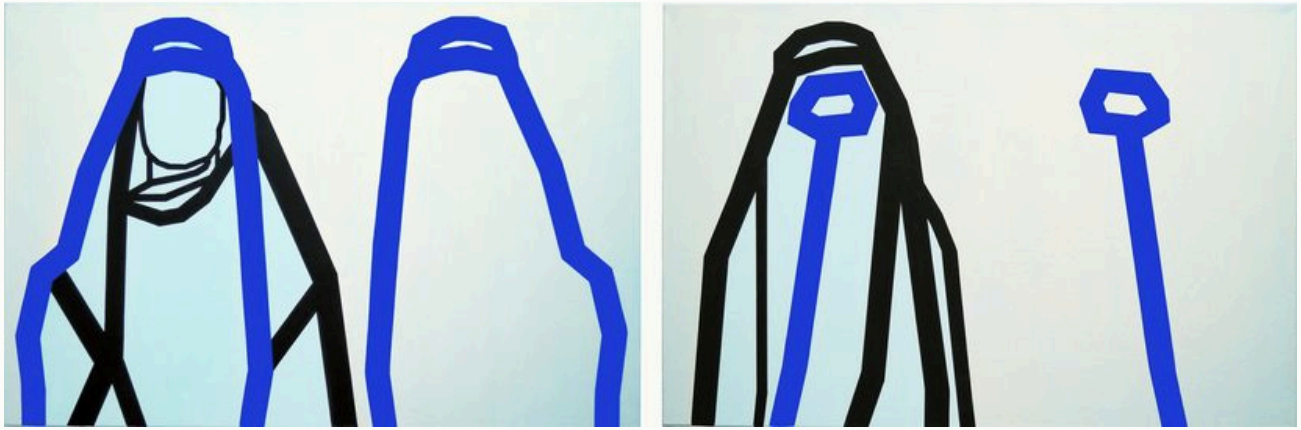
Peter Nowotny

Narcissistic Ornaments

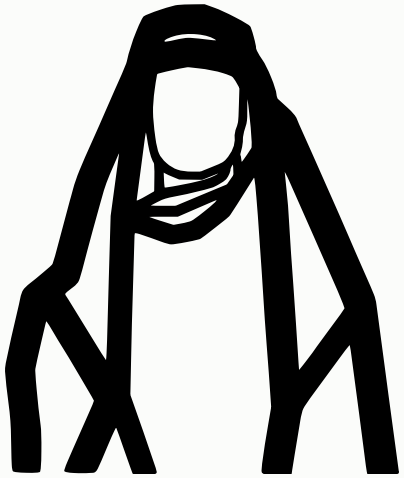
Painting · C-prints · Objects



www.peternowotny.de
info@peternowotny.de

Who do I see in the mirror: myself, or only the dress?

Fashion photographs are made to make us buy. We buy a garment, put it on and look in the mirror. Do we still see ourselves, or only the new piece? That is the question I paint. My sources are fashion photographs, inspired by Oliviero Toscani's pictures for Benetton.



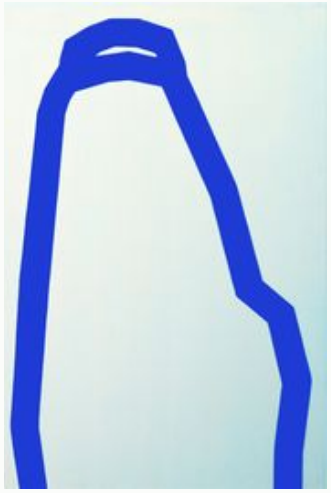
1 The figure becomes line

From the photograph I take only the outlines of the people: black lines, flat and faceless, as in a Russian icon.



2 The pattern is the garment

Over the black lines I lay a coloured pattern. This pattern is the garment.



3 The mirror keeps the pattern

On a panel of its own I mirror only the pattern. The person is lost; the mirror shows nothing but the product.



4 The golden background

The background is golden, painted in acrylic gold, sometimes silver: the heaven of the icons and the sheen of the mirror. I call these pictures narcissistic ornaments.

Shown with: Dress Code Blue I, Diptych, each 120 × 80 cm

Narcissistic Ornaments

The question

I work with photographs from the world of fashion. These pictures have one aim: to make us buy. Someone who buys a garment they like puts it on and sees themselves in the mirror with the new piece. And then I ask: do they see themselves, or only the dress? Is the person lost because the eye stays on the product? To me that is a narcissistic way of looking. That is why I call my pictures narcissistic ornaments.

The source

I was inspired by the photographs of Oliviero Toscani, who made Benetton's advertising for many years. Today I work with fashion photographs from Benetton and from other brands.

The icon

My model for the form is the medieval icon, above all the Russian icons, such as those by Andrei Rublev. The people stand side by side, flat and without space, on a golden background. The golden background is heaven. In my pictures it is painted in acrylic gold, sometimes silver. A mirror, too, has this golden or silver sheen.

The ornament

My second model is the ornament of the Orient, above all that of the Alhambra in Granada: patterns that repeat, mirror and turn, and show no human being.

From photograph to mirror image

I draw the people from the photograph as black lines on the canvas. Over the lines I lay a coloured pattern; that is the garment. Then I digitise the picture. On the computer I erase the figures and keep working with the pattern alone: I mirror it, turn it and recompose it. I transfer this pattern onto a second, sometimes a third canvas. There, only the mirror image of the dress remains. A line runs through all the panels; it is the connecting element.

What remains

The person goes under. The product is at the centre, and it is reflected not as a person but as a pattern.

Peter Nowotny



Narcissistic Ornament – Catwalk

Triptych, 1 × 100 × 160 cm, 2 × 100 × 80 cm · Acrylic on canvas, stretcher



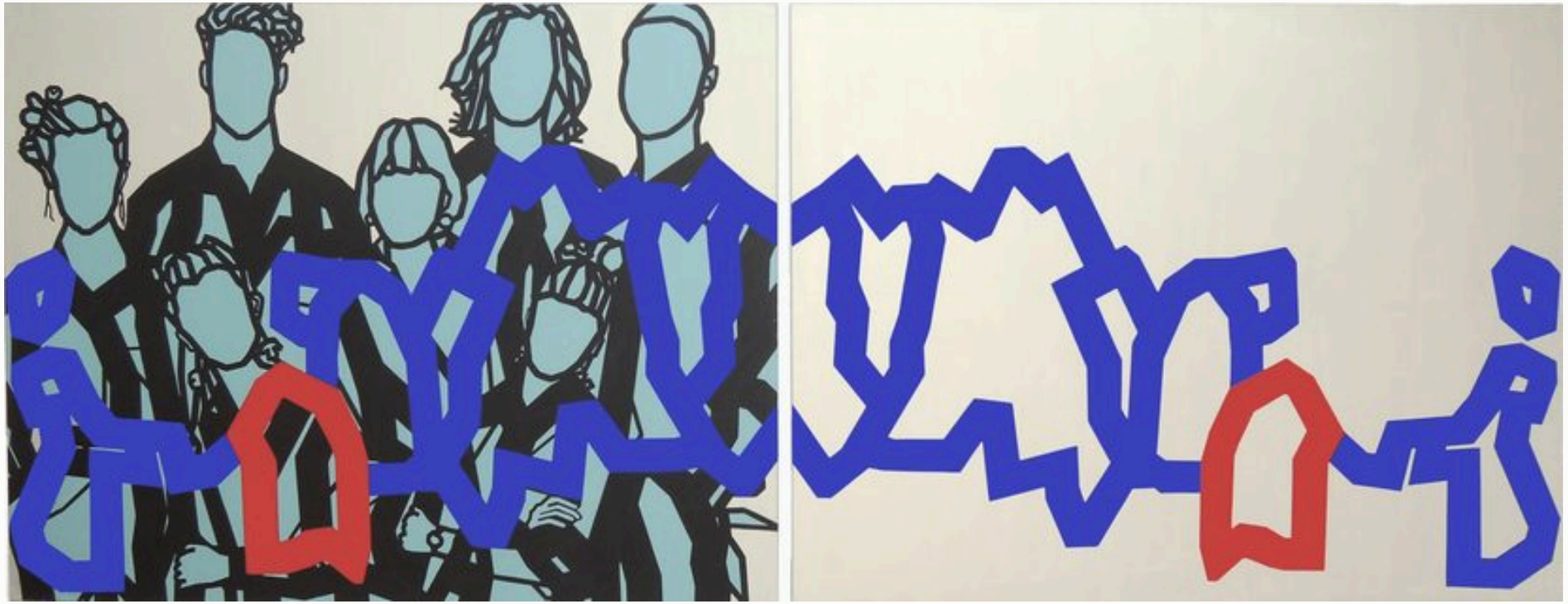
Four Ladies

Triptych, each 130 × 90 cm · Acrylic on canvas, stretcher



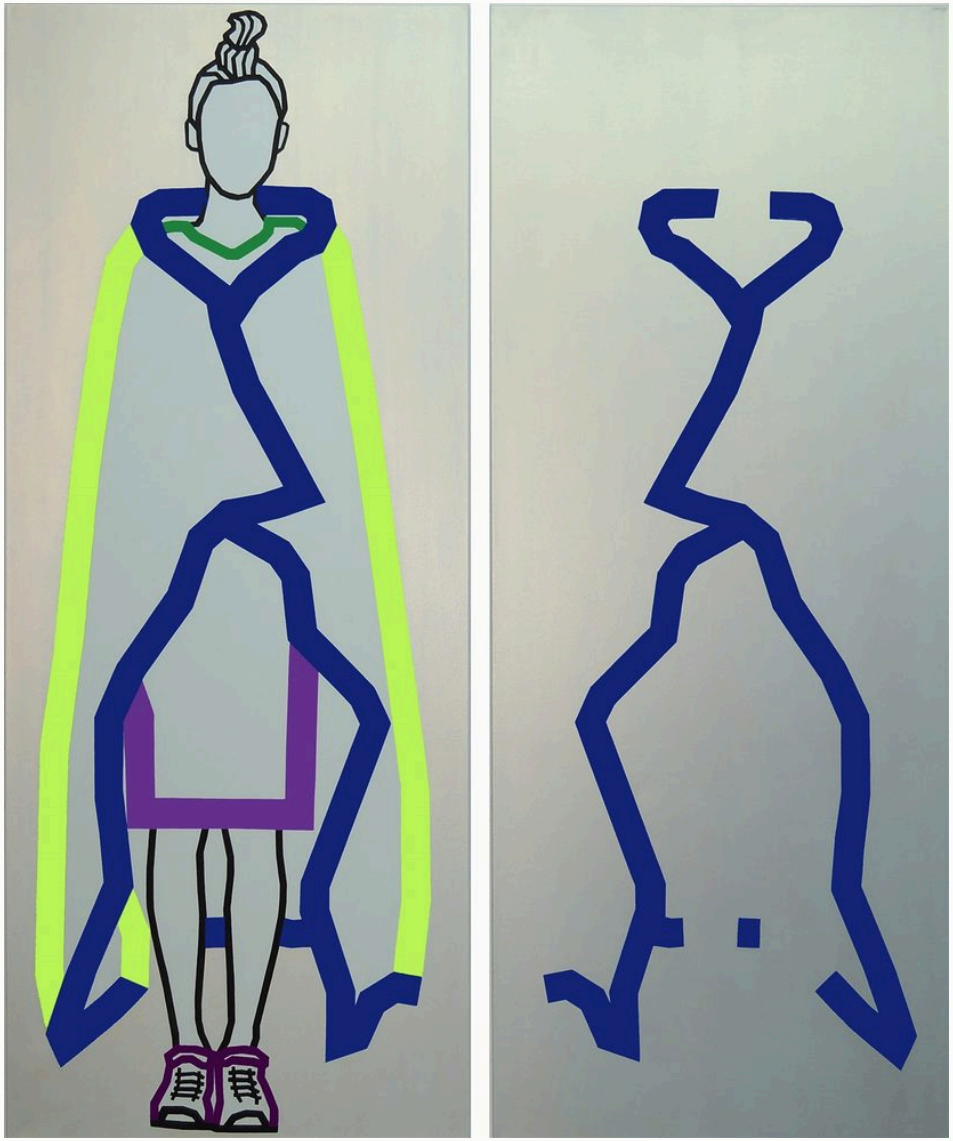
Two Hats I – Shoulder to Shoulder

Triptych, 1 × 160 × 100 cm, 2 × 160 × 60 cm · Acrylic on canvas, stretcher



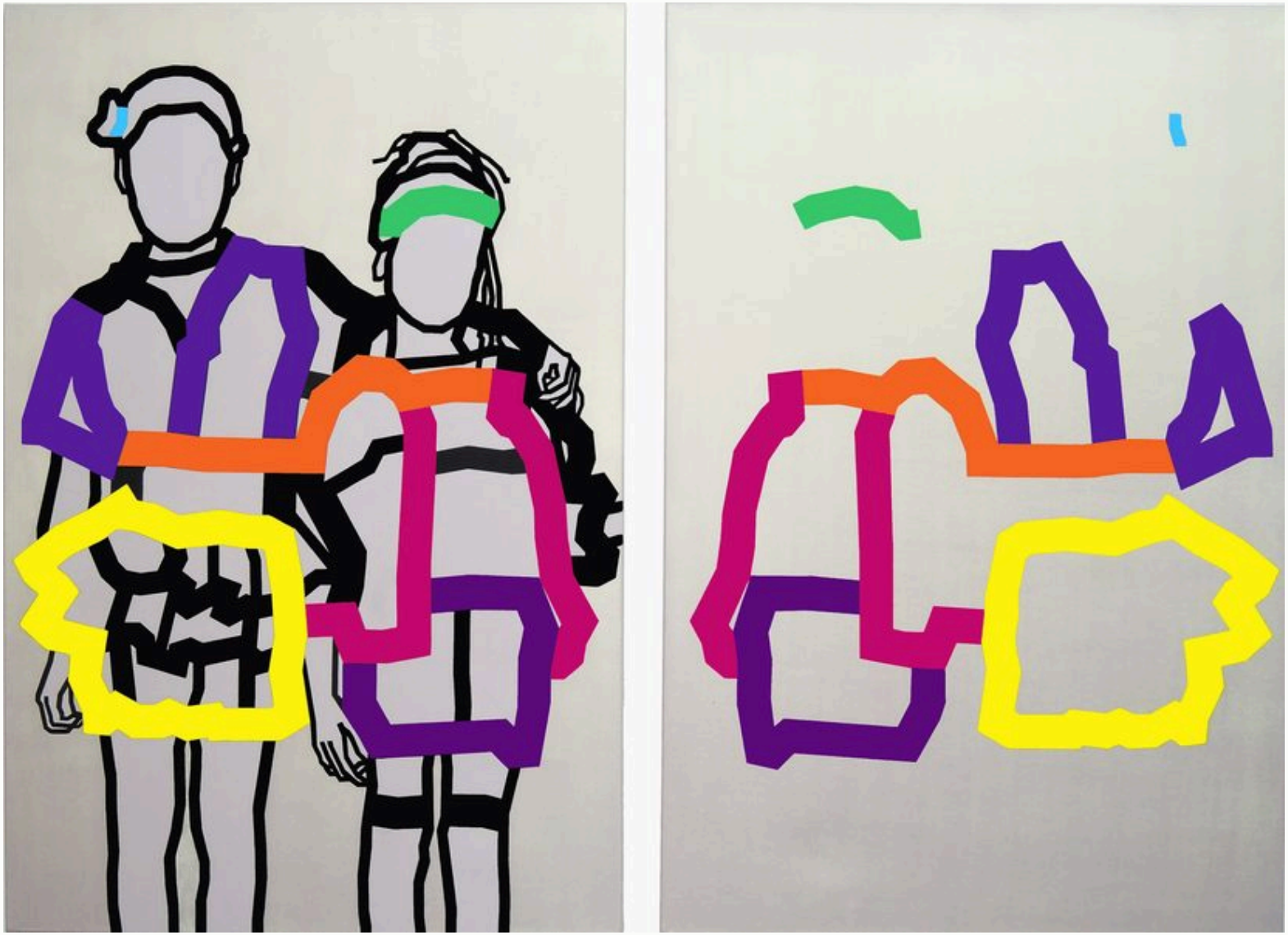
Peergroup – Transcendent

Diptych, each 140 × 180 cm · Acrylic on canvas, stretcher



Green Blanket

Diptych, each 208 × 84 cm · Acrylic on canvas, stretcher



We Stay Friends

Diptych, each 120 × 80 cm · Acrylic on canvas, stretcher

Further series



Inclusinature

32 works

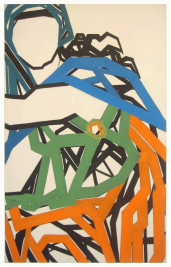
Here I link human and nature. Haemoglobin and chlorophyll are related; they differ only in their central atom. This connection between human and nature is the subject of these pictures.



Heads

17 works

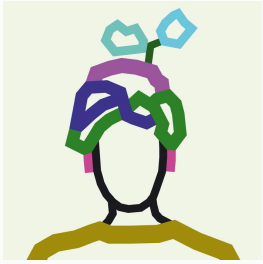
The heads have no golden background. The head itself is at the centre.



Sistine

6 works

My starting point is the Sistine Chapel, the painting of the Renaissance. The Renaissance put perspective at the centre. I take the perspective out and paint in two dimensions only, so the illusion of space disappears.



Haemo-Chlorophyll

6 works

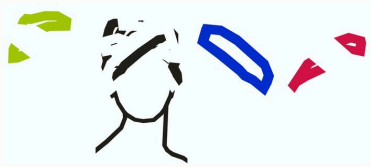
Do we not turn into a tree by breathing out CO_2, and is oxygen not, in turn, a tree within us? Red blood pigment has a central iron atom, while a magnesium ion sits at the centre of green chlorophyll.



Mindsets

12 works

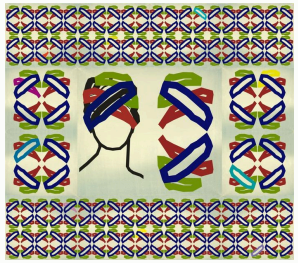
“Mindset” means a way of thinking, an attitude, an outlook. To me nature is not something opposite us and not a resource; we share a metabolism with it. Is the first step towards securing our planet’s future not to readjust our mindset?



Storyboards

19 works

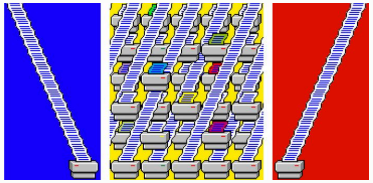
I photographed the paintings, scanned them and vectorised them by hand. This produces picture parts that I rearrange and compose into a new series.



Occident meets Orient

18 works

The starting form is always a figure. It turns into an ornament.



ICON

13 works

For this series I extracted the icons of Windows and assembled them into picture collages.



Objects

9 works

I distribute the digitised and vectorised pictures over several layers and print them on acrylic glass. This gives the two-dimensional pictures a sense of space.

Biography and exhibitions (selection)

1953	Born in Schwäbisch Gmünd
1978	Degree in communications engineering (Dipl.-Ing.), OTH Regensburg
since 1985	Alongside painting, graphic art, sculpture and objects, a second focus on “art and new media” and “art and telecommunications”
1995–2006	Co-founder of the internet art project MEMOPOLIS, the first German virtual cemetery, with the University of Regensburg and Raoul Kaufer
today	Lives and works in Bad Abbach near Regensburg

Art fairs

2024	discovery art fair Cologne, with Galerie ArtAffair Regensburg
2023	art Karlsruhe, with Galerie ArtAffair Regensburg
2019	ARTPERIUM, special exhibition of prints, Messe Karlsruhe, with Galerie ArtAffair
2015	Sydney Contemporary, with Conny Dietzschold Gallery
2015	Art Central Hong Kong, with Conny Dietzschold Gallery

Solo and duo exhibitions

2023	“Mindset”, Galerie ArtAffair, Regensburg
2019	“poligonal”, with Raoul Kaufer, Galerie ArtAffair, Regensburg
2016	“ICON(S)”, Galerie ArtAffair, Regensburg
2016	“DIWAN”, with Jürgen Böhm, Kunstpartner Galerie Adlmannstein
2015	“Reflection Ornaments and the Spirit of Gold Coast”, 19 Karen Contemporary Artspace, Gold Coast, Australien
2012	“Social Ornaments”, Galerie ArtAffair, Regensburg
1998	“ICON”, Galerie Licht/Schatten, Regensburg

Contact

Peter Nowotny
Rosenstraße 19
D-93077 Bad Abbach, Germany

info@peternowotny.de
+49 (0)171 7825619
www.peternowotny.de

All works are available. Prices on request.
Represented in the Regensburg region by Galerie ArtAffair.

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