

Bernard Heesen Geschmacksverirrungen in Glas



Brutto Gusto_fine arts
Torstraße 175
10115 Berlin
www.bruttogusto.berlin

Monday – Friday 10 am – 7 pm
Saturday 10 am – 6 pm

29.01

26.03 2016

Opening: Friday 29 January 6 – 9 pm



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Since the very beginning of his career, Bernard Heesen (1958) has worked on a glass oeuvre that has its origins in the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London in 1851. The diversity of objects displayed in this groundbreaking exhibition has inspired Heesen to create a visual idiom that has earned him a unique place within contemporary glass. Strange and colourful in equal measure, his baroque glass objects cry out for our attention, sometimes attracting, sometimes repelling. Bernard Heesen is unique in his ability to reveal the unsung qualities of the decorative arts of the nineteenth century – long known as The Ugly Period – and to translate them into a completely personal design style.

The most recent evidence of this talent are the glass objects that he presents under the title *Geschmacksverirrungen* (Lapses of Taste), a term borrowed from the German art historian Gustav Edmund Pazaurek (1865-1935) known for, among others things, his elaborate publications on glass that have lost none of their relevance today. In the curatorial field, Pazaurek distinguished himself by organising a new display of applied arts at the Landesgewerbemuseum in Stuttgart in 1909 made up purely of items of questionable taste. He entitled the accompanying publication *Geschmacksverirrungen im Kunstgewerbe* (Lapses of Taste in the Applied Arts). In rousing prose, Pazaurek described countless examples of poor taste. Lapses of taste in relation to materials included milk glass used to suggest that an object was made from porcelain and other remarkable objects fashioned from human hair or even human bones. 'Errors' with regards to the function of the object or the technique employed, such as pressed glass parading as cut and polished crystal, were also included among Pazaurek's *Geschmacksverirrungen*. The publication demonstrates the author's keen, analytical eye for applied arts of the past and of his own period.

That the six new works by Bernard Heesen are presented as *Geschmacksverirrungen* suggests, on the one hand, that they are an ode to The Ugly Period, and on the other, that Bernard Heesen knows 'his classics'. Pazaurek's books are still worth reading a century later for their surprising vision of decorative arts. If we apply Pazaurek's criteria to Heesen's new objects, we will find them lacking. In Heesen's hands glass remains glass, despite its rich colour palette and texture. Although in formal terms his objects refer to utilitarian objects, they are consciously stripped of their function. What remains is another category, which Pazaurek describes as: objects with a physical appearance that is at odds with the art form and good taste. But here too we have no 'match'. Because if Pazaurek were alive today he would undoubtedly consider the work of Bernard Heesen as good taste and as an intelligent translation of the applied arts of The Ugly Period.

Titus M. Eliëns, The Hague, December 2015