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GALLERY TWO

Alfred Neumayr: Unnamed World

Nothingness, for Alfred Neumayr, was never a blank. It was a charged beginning he circled with ink until something like a world appeared—a place where a simple object, a mythic figure, or an entire cosmos might surface without ever quite resolving into a name. In the quiet insistence of his hand, nothingness becomes less an absence than a field of possibility, tested line by line on cardboard and canvas.

Born in 1958 in Tulln, Lower Austria, Neumayr followed a conventional path for many years, apprenticing and then working as a printer in the same town. The long, repetitive days of that profession left him with a deep familiarity with ink, paper, and the rigors of precision, even if their imaginative potential lay dormant. Only after a burnout in 2005 forced him out of that job did drawing begin to surface as something other than a sideline—first as a suggestion from a friend, then as a way of staying in motion when every other framework seemed to fall away.

It took several years for this impulse to find its place. In 2011, a social worker brought him to the open studio in Gugging in the outskirts of Vienna, a space that offers time, materials, and attention to anyone willing to work, regardless of background or diagnosis. There, Neumayr settled into a daily rhythm. Acrylics and watercolors came first, as if he had to try on the more obvious languages of painting before discovering that his own voice resided in the fineness of the line. The formats grew larger, the exposure time longer, and the work increasingly demanded the kind of patience and endurance that had once been spent on print runs.

He remained skeptical of the word “artist,” calling it a funny term, as if it introduced an unnecessary layer of performance between himself and the work. What mattered to him was movement: the fact of doing something, running or drawing, keeping the body and the mind from stalling. When he spoke of drawing, he described a simple chain of transformations—he moves himself, he moves the pen, the pen moves across the surface, and in the friction of those gestures pen and ink and paper metamorphose into a picture. Sometimes this felt like a struggle, especially when the pen refused his intentions, but the struggle was part of the point: an insistence on staying with a process that might not offer guarantees.

His drawings begin without models and without plans. He starts at a random point and lets the line go where it will, trusting that, somewhere within the tangle, a motif will present itself. From a distance, the sheets can seem almost purely abstract, woven from delicate, monochrome filigree. Step closer and figures start to press forward: clusters that might be crowds or constellations, masses that read as eroded cliffs or nebulae, beings whose morphing limbs recall myth and folklore more than any specific story. This doubleness—at once pattern and apparition—holds the work in a perpetual state of becoming.

Materially, Neumayr is exacting. India ink, various pens, cardboard, canvas, laid and ordinary papers: each support offers a slightly different resistance, a different way of receiving the line. At some point, an encounter with etching shifted his attention to the surface itself. Realizing how an etching needle could build structure, he began to pierce, scratch, and thin his drawings, turning the sheet into something closer to a relief. Lines vary in thickness, cross and cluster into rhythms, while

incisions catch the light and break the skin of the image. The result is a subtle vibration between drawing and carving, flatness and depth, like a terrain traced and then eroded at the same time.

The worlds that arise from this process are not named so much as nudged in certain directions. Titles might come from a dictionary, from a stray word overheard, from the drift of his surroundings. Neumayr's titles ("Totem," "Eronauts") tilt toward narrative without closing down other readings. These words act less as captions than as small gravitational pulls, leaving the viewer free to find different figures, stories, and spaces depending on where the eye lands and how long it lingers. Each work is, in this sense, an unnamed world that can accommodate many names.

Neumayr often returned to the formulation that he draws nothingness. Nothingness, for him, is an origin rather than a void, something closer to a horizon of potential in which Nirvana, a cup on the table, and a spiral galaxy all coexist before they are separated out. To try to draw that state is to accept that the task will never be finished; every completed work is only one temporary crystallization of a field that could always have turned out otherwise. The discipline is in returning to the page, in tracing once more the uncertain path from formlessness toward form, knowing that the route will be different each time.

To spend time with Neumayr's work is to witness endurance made visible. Each work condenses countless small decisions and hesitations, the arm hovering before it commits, the pen testing how far nothingness can be pushed without collapsing into either noise or pure figuration. The worlds that result do not resolve into clean allegories or neat cosmologies. They remain unnamed, or only provisionally named, as if to honor the openness from which they came. Looking at them, one senses that nothingness, for Neumayr, was never a place to escape from, but a space to contend with—an inexhaustible beginning that asks, line after line, to be approached again.