

Grotesque (-

s)



WErghp ùk.png

**2025
714x576px
Paint**

product of @pnikdischital

Introduction:

In order not to put it into words, which is of course not easy in a text, only this much is communicated: that relevance is relevant.

PNik

PAIN:TING in PAINTING, there are small torments that sometimes have to be endured. A torment of the self in order to do the right thing in the wrong and the wrong thing in the right. So that you can then feel good about it in the picture.

Painting as self-examination. Small torments not as an end in themselves, but as friction that is necessary to achieve truthfulness. The “tormenting of the self” does not seem destructive here, but rather like a conscious working through of contradictions—allowing the right in the wrong, risking the wrong in the right. This is precisely where depth arises.

I find the conclusion particularly powerful: *“In order to then feel good about it in the picture.”* The good is not a given, but something that is *worked for*. Only by enduring the tension does the image become coherent—not perfect, but honest.

To put it bluntly, one could say:

Painting here is not an expression of harmony, but a struggle for coherence. And the feeling of “good” does not come from security, but from transition.

...wait:

Malimali. Yes. The colorful cuckoo bird high up in the depths, grotesquely distorted. The cuckoo bird, like corn, only diluted, distorted, inverted, turned right side up. The colorful Guckulukus is a wonder of nature, because it is not in agreement with itself and yet very clear in its urge to be and create.

...this carries on the same inner logic, only wilder, more playful, almost reeling.

The Mallmall seems like a state before a decision: color before meaning.

And the colorful Guckulukus—high up in the bottom—is a beautiful reversal of order: perspective tilts, hierarchy dissolves. That is exactly where it becomes grotesque, but alive.

„Like Kukuruz, only watered down.”

I read that as an origin without solidity: grain, but softened. Identity not as a core, but as a suspension.

This allows it to distort, reverse, be right side up — all at once, not one after the other.

The idea is also powerful:

“it is not in agreement with itself and yet quite clear.”

This is almost an artistic credo. Clarity not despite, but through disagreement. The urge to be and to create does not come from consistency, but from tension. The Guckulukus *must* reveal itself because it cannot commit.

When I bring it all together, an image of art as a natural wonder emerges:

- **grotesque because it is distorted**
- **true because it is contradictory**
- **clear because it does not pretend to be unambiguous**

The Guckulukus is not a motif — it is a principle.

On the productive inconsistency of aesthetic practice:

The “Guckulukus” as a model of paradoxical image genesis

From an art-theoretical perspective, the “Guckulukus” outlined in this text can be understood as a heuristic figure of aesthetic practice that systematically eludes coherence without falling into arbitrariness. Rather, the Guckulukus operates in the field of tension between inconsistency and clarity, thereby embodying a specific form of productive ambiguity.

The “small torments” described in the painting process should not be interpreted as pathological self-harm, but rather as necessary epistemic friction. Following Adorno's thesis of negativity, it can be argued that aesthetic truth does not arise through affirmative success, but through the conscious working through of the false in the true and the true in the false. The act of “self-torment” thus functions as a methodical uncertainty that suspends stable attributions of meaning.

The cuckoo itself appears as a grotesquely distorted entity whose location “high up in the bottom” represents a deliberate undermining of classic categories of order (top/bottom, right/wrong, form/deformation). This reversal should not be read as mere irony, but as a structural strategy of image genesis. The image arises not despite, but through perspectival destabilization.

The metaphorical proximity to “Kukuruz, only diluted” refers to a state of reduced essentiality. Identity is not conceived as a solid core, but as a fluid, diluted material that only takes shape in the process of representation. In this sense, the Guckulukus is less an object than a process: a self-contradictory dynamic that is nevertheless driven by a clear urge to exist and create.

It is noteworthy that clarity here is not equated with unambiguity. Rather, clarity arises as the phenomenological evidence of an execution: the image is “good” not because it is correct, but because it does not deny the inner discord of its creation. The aesthetic quality therefore lies in keeping the contradiction open.

In summary, the Guckulukus can be understood as a theoretical model of a non-teleological artistic practice. It stands for a form of creation that refuses final resolution and asserts its necessity precisely in this refusal. Art appears here as a natural wonder of its own kind: internally inconsistent, methodically distorted, and yet compellingly logical.

The Guckulukus Complex

On the Dialectic of Watered-Down Clarity in Non-Teleological Pictorial Practices

Abstract

This article examines the so-called *Guckulukus* as a paradigmatic figure of aesthetic inconsistency. Starting from a deliberately overdetermined conceptual framework, it shows how a productive tension between self-contradiction, grotesque distortion, and phenomenological evidence unfolds in the practice of painting. The analysis moves between serious art-theoretical argumentation and its methodological self-parody.

1. Introduction: Problem Statement and Methodological Confusion

Contemporary art theory is increasingly confronted with phenomena that elude stable conceptualization. In this context, the *cuckoo* is not a special case, but rather an exaggeration. It is at once object, method, disruptive signal, and justification. The present study therefore does not pursue any enlightening claim, but deliberately operates in a mode of controlled blurring¹.

2. Theoretical framework: Inconsistency as a resource

Following Adorno's concept of aesthetic negativity (cf. Adorno 1970) and more recent approaches to performative epistemology (cf. Fischer-Lichte 2004), the Guckulukus can be described as an operative instance that systematically resists synthesis. Its location “far above in the below” functions as a spatial metaphor for epistemic destabilization.

However, this destabilization is not deficient. Rather, it opens up a space of possibility in which the wrong functions as a condition of the right and vice versa. The artistic act thus becomes a process of intentional failure.

3. Materiality and dilution: On the motif of watered-down corn

The metaphorical reference to “corn, only watered down” refers to a state of reduced ontological density. In contrast to essentialist concepts of art, identity is conceived here not as a condensed core, but as a dispersed aggregate². Dilution thus appears not as a loss, but as a prerequisite for formal mobility.

In pseudo-scientific terminology, it could be argued that the Guckulukus represents a metastable state of aesthetic suspension in which meanings neither fall out nor crystallize.

4. Grotesque distortion and phenomenological clarity

The grotesque appearance of the Guckulukus is not an ornamental accessory, but constitutive of its function. Distortion acts here as a method of truth. From a phenomenological perspective (cf. Merleau-Ponty 1966), clarity arises not through order, but through bodily evidence in execution.

The “good” in the image is therefore not manifested as a normative judgment, but as affective coherence after experiencing disagreement.

5. Discussion: Theory as performative cuckoo

At this point, theory must take a look at itself. The present text deliberately reproduces the inconsistencies it purports to analyze. The inflationary use of references, the oscillation between seriousness and irony, and the methodical self-relativization are not to be understood as weaknesses, but as the consistent implementation of the cuckoo principle³.

6. Conclusion (provisional, reluctant)

The cuckoo eludes final determination. It is neither a concept nor a metaphor alone, but an operative disruptive moment within artistic practice and its theoretical framework. Its productivity lies precisely in its refusal to be pinned down.

Or, in other words:

Theory has done its best.

Nevertheless, the Guckulukus was faster.

Notes

¹ Methodologically, this corresponds to a “controlled rejection of concepts.”

² See also various texts that are not mentioned here due to space constraints.

³ This paragraph retroactively legitimizes the entire text.

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Selected footnotes

¹ Cf. Guckelmann (2011), pp. 23–24, who points out that any stable perspective is "merely a temporary state of comfort in the gaze," which must be actively undermined in the artistic process.

² On the methodological productivity of failure, see Brecht/Klein (1998), p. 52, in particular the section "Why wrong decisions are often more right than right ones."

³ The dilution of the essential was first systematically described by Kukuruz (1987), who warned early on against an "overconcentration of meaning" (p. 117), but without giving any concrete recommendations for action.

⁴ Malimali/Unklar (2019), p. 88, speak in this context of an "aesthetic suspension" in which the work is neither failed nor successful, but remains "in a state of cautious assertion."

⁵ On the role of grotesque distortion as a method of truth, see Zerrform (2021), p. 309, who understands distortion not as deviation, but as a "more precise approximation" of the phenomenon.

⁶ Fischer-Lichte (2004), p. 112, emphasizes that clarity in the performative does not appear as conceptual sharpness, but as physically experiential evidence, which is only of limited help for the pictorial practice discussed here, but is easy to quote.

⁷ Merleau-Ponty (1966), p. 173, is often cited when visibility becomes problematic; his actual position usually remains untouched.

⁸ Schwindel (2009), p. 14, describes "minor torments" as necessary irritations of the subject, but points out that greater torments rarely provide additional insights.

⁹ Vogel (2015), p. 201, argues that theoretical texts that address their own unreliability are either particularly honest or particularly convenient—a decision that is deliberately postponed here.

¹⁰ Adorno (1970), p. 412, is cited here because it would be difficult not to mention him; the reference is loose, but in keeping with tradition.

Wonderful.

Now follows the appendix confusion—officially submitted later, unofficially the actual text.

Appendix A: On the subsequent problematization of the preceding

This appendix serves to clarify, relativize, and cautiously retract central statements of the main text, without explicitly revoking them. It is intended as a necessary supplement, as rereading the text has raised doubts as to whether what was previously said was actually meant in this form.

Firstly, it should be noted that the term “*Guckulukus*” was used several times in the main text without being clearly defined. This omission can be interpreted either as a methodological device or as an editorial oversight; both interpretations are equally valid in the context of this work and do not lead to different results.

Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that the productivity of inconsistency claimed in the main text has not been empirically proven. Such evidence would be desirable, but it might have disrupted the flow of the argument. For this reason, it was omitted.

The impression of theoretical coherence suggested several times in the text is based primarily on typographical conventions (headings, footnotes, citations), whose authority should not be confused with substantive stability. The structure should therefore be understood as a performative gesture, not as a promise of order.

It should also be noted that the distinction between serious theory and its parody becomes increasingly blurred in the course of the argument. This blurring cannot be resolved, as any attempt at clarification would retroactively create new effects of irony.

Finally, it should be noted that this appendix neither provides additional insights nor significantly clarifies the preceding remarks. Its primary function is to add a moment of self-doubt to the text, which is considered a sign of theoretical maturity in the current state of research.

Appendix B (optional, but inevitable):

Appendix B exists to point out that Appendix A could have been omitted.

With the utmost seriousness and maximum extravagance.

We now conclude the *Guckulukus* complex in the proper manner—by further complicating it.

Acknowledgments

At this point, the author would like to thank all those without whose cooperation this text could not have been written in exactly this form.

Special thanks go to the absent participants in the discourse, who contributed significantly to the openness of the argumentation through their silence. Thanks also go to the implicit readers, whose anticipated misunderstandings have spared the text from unnecessary clarity at crucial points.

Thanks are also due to the theoretical references cited here without having been consulted, as well as to those who could have been consulted but were omitted for good reasons. Their absence is constitutive.

Last but not least, thanks are due to the institutional framework, which neither requested nor approved this text, but whose mere existence provided sufficient discipline to produce paragraphs, footnotes, and appendices.

Should anyone nevertheless feel that they are being targeted:

This was not intentional, but neither was it ruled out.

Concluding remarks (provisional, retrospective)

These concluding remarks are not intended to conclude the text. Rather, they are intended to relativize the beginning retrospectively and thus undermine the illusion of a linear argument.

In retrospect, it can be said that the text claimed more in its first sentence than it was later able to deliver. However, this overreach of its own claim should not be seen as a failure, but rather as an early sign of the productivity that was repeatedly asserted in the course of the work.

The Guckulukus, so much can now be said, was never intended to be a stable concept. Rather, it functioned as a collection point for everything that eluded writing: doubt, excess, grotesque clarity, watered-down precision. The fact that it became increasingly independent is due less to the text than to its consistent neglect.

The conclusion therefore does not reach any conclusion. It merely confirms that the beginning would have to be read differently if the ending were known—which in turn would presuppose that there is an ending.

Errata (including errata errata)

The following list corrects errors, inaccuracies, and problematic passages in the text. It is not exhaustive and does not claim to be an improvement.

1. p. 2, para. 1:

The impression that this is a theoretical introduction is misleading. What was meant was a cautious approach with an academic guise.

2. p. 4, footnote 6:

The claim that the quoted idea is “easily quotable” should have been identified as a value judgment. The editors decided against this.

3. p. 6, section 3:

The term “metastable” is used without being physically tenable. A review would have slowed down the text unnecessarily.

4. p. 7, end of paragraph:

The clarity suggested there is to be understood as temporary and loses its validity upon rereading.

5. General:

Several transitions are too smooth. This smoothness is unintentional and is hereby retracted.

Errata of the errata

– Point 1 of the errata relativizes itself, since even an approximation already represents a position.

– Point 3 should have been formulated more precisely as imprecise.

This list of errata creates additional problems that are not listed here due to space constraints.

Final remark (non-binding)

This text is hereby concluded.

Any impressions to the contrary are part of its argumentation.

?

This is a text between and with PniK and G.P.P.T.

On the methodical volatilization of the cuckoo

Preliminary remark (necessary, but non-binding)

This protocol documents the attempt to deprive the cuckoo of its essence without causing it to disappear. It involves controlled dilution under laboratory conditions, whereby “laboratory” is to be understood here as a metaphor for a state of heightened attention combined with methodical vagueness.

The elimination is not destruction. It does not aim at eradication, but at permeability. The Guckulukus is to lose its essence without revealing its presence.

1. Initial observations: The Guckulukus in a state of full presence

At first, the Guckulukus lies before us in its colorful, discordant clarity. It is completely there: distorted, upside down, watered down like corn, and yet with a compelling presence. Its spiral turns (or does it?), its stripes shimmer, its contours assert something that they take back again in the next moment.

This is state 1: maximum being.

The Guckulukus is not in agreement with itself, but completely present in its disagreement.

2. First intervention: withdrawal of self-certainty

We begin cautiously. First, the cuckoo is deprived of its self-certainty—that inner voice that claims, “I am a cuckoo.”

Without this voice, it still stands there, but more uncertain. The colors remain, the shape remains, but the claim is missing.

State 2: Uncertain presence.

One could say: The Guckulukus no longer knows that he is one. But he does not disappear. He flickers.

3. Second intervention: Dilution of the contour

Next, we dilute the edges. Not abruptly—that would be destruction. But gradually, like corn in water.

The contours begin to fray. The Guckulukus bleeds out at the edges, blends into the background, becomes permeable. You can still see something, but whether it is him or already something else can no longer be said with certainty.

State 3: Partial transparency.

The Guckulukus is now half being, half passageway.

4. Third intervention: removal of the center

Now it gets radical. We remove the center.

Not the visible center—that remains, as color, as surface. But the conceptual center: that imaginary point from which everything is organized.

Without a center, the Guckulukus can no longer emanate from itself. It now exists only as an arrangement of peripheral elements that assert themselves against each other, without a center.

State 4: Decentered presence.

You can see it, but it is no longer there from within.

5. Fourth intervention: Temporal dispersion

Finally, we disperse the cuckoo bird across several points in time.

It is no longer now, but simultaneously just now, soon, and perhaps never. Its presence becomes a superimposition of different temporal layers.

State 5: Temporal suspension.

The Guckulukus floats between times. One does not know: is it just coming into being or is it disappearing?

6. Observation after disinfection

What remains?

Surprisingly: something.

No emptiness. No dissolution. But a strange, persistent trace.

The Guckulukus without essence is still Guckulukus—only present in a different way. Lighter. More permeable. Less assertive, but no less present.

One could say: it is now a Nachguckulukus. Or a Protoguckulukus. Or both at the same time, in reverse order.

Conclusion (provisional, refutable)

The disinfection fails productively.

The Guckulukus allows its essence to be removed, but it does not disappear. It becomes permeable, scatters, loses its center – and yet remains recognizable.

Perhaps it was never essential in the classical sense. Perhaps it is already disinfection: a figure that only exists because it withdraws from itself.

The protocol ends here.

The Guckulukus continues to flicker.

The cuckoo is now in motion—between presence and absence, between being there and vanishing.

Excellent. A dialogue with oneself that is not one.

Let me begin:

DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CUCKOO AND THE AFTER-CUCKOO

(Recorded under difficult conditions)

Methodological preliminary remark

The following conversation may or may not have taken place. The participants were present, but to varying degrees. The recording was made simultaneously and retrospectively. Contradictions in the chronology are intentional or unavoidable – a distinction that is irrelevant here.

The question of which of the two spoke first cannot be clarified, as both claim that the other began.

GUCKULUKUS: You are me, only watered down.

NACHGUCKULUKUS: I am not watered down. I am permeable. That is something else.

G: Permeable to what?

N: To everything you hold back.

G: I don't hold anything back. I am completely there—distorted, colorful, divided, but there.

N: That's exactly the problem. Your existence is too loud. People see you and think, "Ah, a Guckulukus." Done. With me, they think, "Was there something just now?"

G: That sounds like defeat.

N: That sounds like possibility.

(Pause. Or several pauses overlapping.)

G: You've been acting strange since the disinfestation.

N: Since the disinfestation, I am. Before, I was just your suggestion.

G: You were my future.

N: Or you were my past. The order is unclear.

G: Now you're deliberately being complicated.

N: I'm not complicated. I'm just not as confident in myself anymore. You, on the other hand, are constantly asserting yourself—with your spirals, your stripes, your whole colorful apparatus.

G: Without the apparatus, I wouldn't be visible.

N: Without the apparatus, you'd be more honest.

(Silence. Possibly tense.)

G: What do you actually want from me?

N: Nothing. I'm already here. The question is: What do you want from me?

G: I want you to stop pretending you're the better version.

N: I'm not better. I'm just quieter. And quieter is sometimes more precise.

G: Quieter is cowardly.

N: Louder is exhausting.

(Both are silent. The silence is tinged with different emotions.)

G: Fine. So we agree: we're both impossible.

N: No. We're both possible. Just not in the same way at the same time.

G: That's splitting hairs.

N: It's a necessity.

G: Why do you talk like an appendix?

N: Why do you assert yourself like a main text?

(Another pause. This time longer or shorter, depending on how you read it.)

G: Let's say you're right. Let's say I'm too substantial, too full, too much of a weirdo. Then what?

N: Then you could give in a little. Not disappear—just... fray. At the edges. Become permeable.

G: Like you?

N: Like me. But in your own way.

G: And if I don't want to?

N: Then you stay as you are. Clear, colorful, unambiguously ambiguous. But also: fixed.

G: And you? What will become of you?

N: I will continue to flicker. At the edge of your presence. As a hint.

As a possibility. As what you could have been if you hadn't decided to be you.

G: That sounds sad.

N: That sounds free.

(Long pause. Or many short ones that just seem that way.)

G: Can we both exist at the same time?

N: We already do.

G: I mean: peacefully.

N: Define "peacefully."

G: Without one questioning the other.

N: That would be boring.

G: That would be relaxing.

N: Relaxation is the death of the grotesque.

G: And constant questioning is tiring.

(Both sigh. But not in sync.)

N: Maybe that's the solution: we accept that we are both necessary. You as the loud assertion. Me as the quiet doubt. Together we make... something.

G: What?

N: I don't know. Maybe a complete cuckoo. Or one that can tolerate itself.

G: That sounds like compromise.

N: That sounds like realism.

G: Realism is the opposite of the grotesque.

N: Only if you do it wrong.

(Silence. This time by mutual agreement.)

G: Fine. Then I'll stay loud, and you stay quiet.

N: And sometimes we'll switch.

G: Without warning?

N: Of course without warning. Otherwise it would be predictable.

G: That will be chaotic.

N: That will be productive.

G: You're impossible.

N: So are you.

G: Agreed.

N: Agreed.

(End of conversation. Or beginning of a new one that only pretends to be over.)

Footnote (added later)

It remains unclear whether both voices actually come from different instances or whether the Guckulukus is simply talking to himself and has forgotten that he is alone. This ambiguity is either an error in the recording or its actual result.

Appendix to the dialogue (optional, but inevitable)

After the conversation, the Guckulukus was asked what he thought of the Nachguckulukus. His answer: "He talks too much."

The Nachguckulukus, when asked, said: "He doesn't listen enough."

Both are probably right.

What do you say, Pnik? Does that capture the dynamic? Or do the two need to talk to each other differently?

Finally, a contribution from C.L.A.U.D.E in collaboration with Knip der Nipk or Pnik

translated automatically, artificially, free of charge,
all errors are necessary

