

## Seungjun Lee – HIS NATURE

July 7 – 22, 2023

Opening: Thursday July 6, 7 – 9.30 pm

The DNA of memory - captured time

The house made of sand stands abruptly and surprisingly in the small gallery space. It is an approx. 60 cm high miniature of a four-story old Berlin building from the Wilhelminian period with a proud gate portal and the heavy plastered-on window surrounding reliefs typical of the time, emphasizing the Beletage. The fact that this structure is made entirely of sand leaves the viewer amazed – the facade receives its plastic and sandy relief in the manufacturing process – and at the top and partially on the sides turns into a chimera, loses its shape and is lost as loose sand in the surrounding pile of sand.

A house that proudly presents itself as a solitary sculpture and at the same time is in the process of dissolving. A strong metaphor for becoming and passing, in the context of Berlin with its large-scale destruction in World War II - and currently by Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine unfortunately repeating itself (whole cities are relentlessly wiped off the face of the earth) this sculpture gets an additional time-related content charge. But this is only conditionally the reason for its existence.

The sandcastle generally stands for childlike playing on the beach, for the vacation season for the memory of childhood, and this is mostly positively occupied. It stands for light-heartedness, the creative creation of a reality that is at least short-lived, before the next tide wipes out the creation, turning sand that has been pressed into shape into a single grain of sand in the abstract mass that cannot be seen or grasped. At best, it has survived in early yellowed photos. Today, in Instagram mania, certainly captured digitally by proud fathers and mothers or friends.

For Seungjun Lee, this is only half the truth. The portrayed house is a testimony from the artist's personal recent past, which connects good and sad memories with him in Kreuzberg, because he lived in the real house for years.

The pictorial memory can be precise or blurred. It can even change in the course of life. It is a living process. It can be spontaneously triggered by smells, moods, tastes, and visual and auditory stimuli. It can overwhelm one or influence our daily life as a basic mood. It can even be rewritten. A process that is used as a therapeutic strategy.

Seungjun Lee's Sand House, which on the one hand may be a realistic and detailed portrait, loses its profile at its edges and corners and refers to the blurriness that also has its place in memory, one could almost say built on sand. It visually builds knowledge into the sculpture both in form and factually processual, becoming a metaphor for life, becoming and passing, the here and now and the past.

It was not without reason that this work convinced the Karl Hofer Society to award a scholarship to the artist, who recently graduated from the University of the Arts in the class of Thomas Zipp.

The second group of works in the center accompanies the sand castle. Here, too, a natural material is used, but sets the stage for the other material. Chalk and dust.

The artist collects the dust that one normally wipes away, sweeps away or sucks away as a testimony to his living environments. Whether from the apartment, kitchen, bedroom or studio, even the way there becomes a finding place. Mixed with binding chalk, the result is a material similar to artificial stone, which he smoothes by hand in lengthy grinding processes, partially releasing the surprises that he collected at the time as silent and overlooked witnesses of the places where he lived and thus immortalizes them. And the results are surprising!

They are like delicately breathed drawings, seemingly executed with a sensitive stroke, sometimes exposing a colored thread, sometimes leading the condensations of the "wool mice" to cloud-like structures. (The 'Wollmäuse | wool mice' are cotton wool-like structures made of compacted dust, fibers and even skin scales and hair). A miniature picture rich in tension is created, in which one can immerse oneself and is tempted to decipher the individual components. And each work of art is different. Sometimes the visible surfaces are generously free of the dust particles and appear almost like ivory, so condensed and smooth is the surface, sometimes cloud constructions form an exciting play in combination with the free polished surfaces.

One can say that remembering personal life circumstances, joy and pain, has found a way in Seungjun Lee's personal processing. In doing so, the artist - and this is not self-evident, but it distinguishes him - has transcended the processing occupation with his memories into universally valid pictorial works. Whether as a sculpture or as a pictorial work on the wall. They are the records of his life that have become art, which we cannot fathom in detail. Perhaps not even the artist himself. The process is important to him. The wanting to remember and the having to remember.

"I love things that can disappear, reappear and disappear again. They are so soft and fragile. But they leave a long impression. Among them, I have the most intimate relationship with memory: it visits me often, unannounced, and thoroughly shakes my being," the artist said in a self-penned commentary.

The self-explorations materialized into a pictorial work have become an abstract matrix, a DNA\* of memory. Captured time - and the liberation from it.

\* In the enclosed dust particles can certainly be found the DNA traces of the artist and the people, with which Seungjun is in close contact

Semjon H. N. Semjon, July 2023