

Thomas Prochnow – *de_konstruktion*

3. Februar – 2. März 2023

Prochnow would not be Prochnow if he did not once again present a concert of diverse materials, forms and colors. And in various artistic genres. From the large wall sculpture (actually an object, as it is composed additively, but nevertheless comes across as an effective sculpture in its grandeur and power), to a small series of wall objects, the wooden pictures, to the photographs (as pigment prints) and the accompanying screen print.

In this day and age, in which a sustainable economy would allow mankind to stay on this planet a little longer, in which a generation is growing up that has understood this and demands action accordingly, Thomas Prochnow already has a good 20 years behind him in which he has implemented the sustainable economy, here meaning the production of art. We know that necessity is the mother of invention and almost all young artists have a shortage of money in common (except for those born with a silver spoon in their mouth). So you need a strategy to get hold of artistic material with the little you have in order to be able to work more or less freely.

But it is not only respect for the thing, the everyday thing, appreciation and resource management that have brought Thomas Prochnow to art. It is also the irrepressible free will to see himself as an individual and to formulate his own view of this world. The norm, as a set of rules created by man, which presents itself everywhere at every moment and can be felt in every reality of life, is a great gift that man has given himself as a child of the earth. But it is also a curse. And it is precisely in this field of tension that the artist uses his work to better understand himself and the world and to act creatively. The DIN (German Industrial Standard) standardization system alone is inextricably linked to the world (at least the European one). From the DIN-A6 postcard to the DIN-A4 sheet to the DIN-A0 poster. The fact that regulations and the creation of standards can sometimes produce bizarre results is well known to us from the mockery of the EU and the curvature of the banana. The standard as an opportunity, but also as a dictate.

When Thomas Prochnow uses found objects, for example wooden slats and formerly used MDF or chipboard, which may still have a paint finish, he saws them up, glues them together and saws them to a DIN size, creating, for example, his series of »Holzbilder | Wooden Pictures«, which has been running for years. And then the standard has already been cheated, the faceless, purely functional standard has been given an individual face. The essence and structure of the material, its no longer known prehistory, combine to form an artifact of creative will and creative power. And this seems to be infinite with Thomas Prochnow! The result may be a delicate, almost breathy panel painting in its appearance, or a filigree wooden weave, which has only the DIN size and the principle of gluing together as a unifying common feature and comes across as richly varied, from minimally reduced to baroque lavishly.

The sustainable aspect is also present in the recycling process of his own installations. Once constructed, the material used is used again and again until it is minimized to the size of the »Wooden Pictures« or similar.

Speaking of installations and spatial interventions: here, too, Prochnow proves to be a creative master who knows how to breathe new life into any space through his work. He either reinforces its essence or counteracts it, going into opposition through his interventionist interventions (cf. the numerous published examples on his homepage www.thomas-prochnow.de or that of Semjon Contemporary).

The last exhibitions at Semjon Contemporary, »edit-2.0/Der Zweite Öffentliche Raum« (2020) and »edit_black« (2019), »Kraftwork« and »Fokus Garten-Salon« (both 2015) have analytically demonstrated this. The artist, who works with and against the norm, creates a set of rules for himself that is radically internalized and at the same time tells of life, its highs and lows, high gloss and sordidness, acquiring a poetic and sensual power in the work.

Coming from street art, and very early on impressed and inspired by the departure of modernism in the direction of abstraction (it was not for nothing that he became an art student), he quickly left the established path in the graffiti scene and instead left behind geometric signs as tags in the context of abandoned and dilapidated architecture and traffic infrastructures. He calls these hostile places »The Second Public Space«. Respected by his colleagues until the demolition of the architecture (i.e. no overpainting!), he has become a major figure in the scene. But that's not all. An outstanding artistic photograph has emerged from the usual trophy photography in this community, which allows us to participate in the fleeting work of art that is doomed to destruction even as it is being created. The precisely placed geometric and monochrome figures on peeling plaster have a radiance that is at the same time poetic, and are very impressively composed in the context of the space as a photographic work of art. The geometric signs are themselves (standard) patterns, which are indispensable quantities in nature and science. Here we come full circle again.

When Prochnow forms a wall-dominating circle from found pieces of sheet tin in his current main work, he summarizes the experience of his previous work. The tin sheet pieces are the sealing material removed during a house renovation (cf. exhibition title *de_konstruktion*), which is used, for example, between the roof and masonry. Bent, folded and provided with bitumen residue, they are a welcome material for the artist. 2023 at the Kunstverein Gera to create an impressive, room-filling hanging sculpture, he created a wall sculpture at my request - the gallery ceiling is unfortunately unsuitable for this (*_konstruktion*). And it is breathtaking: it stretches into the room with full force and yet gathers together as a whole to form a circular structure. It binds power and radiates it. The bent, massive strips of sheet metal protruding far into the room formulate an aggressive moment, which at the same time withdraws through the interweaving of a multitude of its peers. They become a form-giving structure and create a balanced coexistence. The bitumen residue, which was once applied by the roofers for non-artistic purposes, now corresponds perfectly with the diverse

shimmering metallic sheen, creating a concert of dark and light local tones and at the same time reinforcing the sculptural work into a three-dimensional material painting. Once Prochnow, always Prochnow.

Semjon H. N. Semjon
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