

Nataly Hocke – *Leitkultur*

The term 'Leitkultur' (leit-culture, exemplary or defining culture) is a term weighed down with meaning, difficult to analyse and in Germany frequently misused. In this exhibition it appears as the overall title with an ironic inflection. Nataly Hocke, previously one of Rebecca Horn's master students, has chosen this title for her works and exhibitions. Although they may appear descriptive or simple at first, they are carefully considered. At Semjon Contemporary we encounter familiar objects enclosed in tiny wooden boxes or in artificial miniature spaces. The unexpected combination of material, interlocking elements and assemblages radiate a fascinating lightness in association with the selected materials, which are mostly of natural origin: the objects become in this case three dimensional representations of themselves. Behind everything, stands among other things, the idea of the re-assessment of the evaluation of things and their meanings, as if the artist would as it were, free things from their function.

Furthermore there are also two dimensional works: the motif of hands on the invitation card are details of century old paintings from the art galleries of the world which Nataly Hocke has condensed by focussing on these depicted photographs. With this concentration and combination of religious 'pointing the finger' and a simultaneous multiple gesture, there is a reference to our western, christian – cultural conditioning and 'defining culture' and also to the then hand skills which in renaissance and baroque times were the norm. Today in contrast, our fingertips touch primarily computer keyboards or swipe lightly over smartphone screens; only those who still engage in gardening, tailoring or sculpting, create creative possibilities with their own hands. (...) This interaction of hands (...) is last but not least a reference to the most important body part of the sculptor. Hocke's working processes and intentions are indicated via one of her most recent works 'world heritage': we see a number of small fragments of stone behind a hollowed out recess in glass which is enclosed in a small painted white box. The 'Tuffsteinbruchstücke', volcanic stone fragments, stem from the Hercules monument in Kassel, the birth place of the artist. The castle like foundation for the bronze figure was made some 300 years ago and with the passage of time fragments break and fall away. Nevertheless the massive monument could be counted in the future as a 'world heritage'. The short title for the object arose shortly after the official UNESCO application was made. Stone fragments collected on site from the fragile monument were later sewn by Hocke with silk thread on to the back surface of the presentation box.

In her work everything apparently co-exists harmoniously, the small and large format, the „all-over“ principle and the systematic, the collected and built, and the additive and subtractive. Many boxes are filled to the brim, some such as 'world heritage' remain almost empty. In turn others contain not the object itself, but it's depiction, such as 'Bottle-Box'.

Underlying as ever are labourious, fundamental and intelligent considerations regarding material and presentation in contemporary sculpture. The place of presentation, the gallery becomes an extended space for these ruminations and questionings. The objects are 'silent witnesses', states the artist, she creates 'not depictions, but things in themselves'. The things/objects are de-contextualised by her and given a new 'place'. One can ponder in front of Hocke's work with regard to the picture/depiction relationship, about two and three dimensions or about the nature of material in its pure form and her cryptically layered staging.

Dr. Matthias Harder
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