

Ute Essig: *City Talks*

The title of this exhibition is borrowed from the corresponding new work series by Ute Essig, a collection of complex *Stitch Works* that reflect a typical Berlin and/or general urban metropolitan reality, the world of graffiti. This method of communication may be understood in terms of marking territory by competing street artists as well as a form of political messaging that is addressed towards ,other' city residents.

Over the past few years Ute Essig has photographed instances of graffiti texts found in and around Kreuzberg and has carried these images over into her stitch works. The inherent contradiction between handmade paper as a luxury item to be preserved, and the ephemeral sprayed messages on the other, is endorsed by a further contrast of craftsmanship. In this case even genuine ,feminine craftsmanship' of the ,home and stove belittlement' connotated embroidery.

Ute Essig, However, is not a crafts(wo)man, who translates the partially rough slogans such as ,fuck you all' into a beautiful, pleasant, 19th century, embroidery. Instead she consciously imbeds ,mistakes' as an antagonistic principle. For example, not hiding the starting and ending threads, but using them to create an all over structure, which partially allows the appearance of the verdict. Positioning these *Stitch Works* not at the centre of the paper, like in her earlier works, she further translates the aesthetics of the interventionist act of the graffiti writers, without negating a balanced relation towards the paper.

These new works are connected to an earlier artwork, which was made in another, nonetheless ,feminine' media, porcelain. *1 sqm Berlin*, consists of casts of the typical cobblestone surface found across all Berlin districts. It portrays our city in two ways: as the pavements of our sidewalks and as a single stone it serves as a metaphor for a political Berlin expressed every year during the Walpurgis night before May 1st, but foiled through the delicate and fragile material of biscuit porcelain. This work is on view in the rear situated Salon Cabinet and corresponds indirectly to the main exhibition.

The installation of Ute Essig's porcelain *Traffic Cones* could be understood as a further Berlin portrait. Since its reunification, Berlin finds itself in the situation of perpetual self-definition, as is visible daily in the mass of construction sites. This is a further moment of *City Talks*, that concerns itself with the movement of being on the way towards a metropolis. Once this daily blasphemy stops one could read it as a sign of being ,finished' -and probably boring, because of it being reconstructed to death.

The icing on the cake in Ute Essig's, 'Berlin Portraits' could be her *Knitted Ladder*, a ceiling high, space occupying dysfunctional ladder, a drawing-like metaphor for megalomaniac Berlin dreams. Or it could be her new video work, which accidentally experiences in the context of our drama of the new metropolitan airport a new meaning: Shattering megalomaniac dreams?

Not really, Berlin will become what it will become, but even better – than it ever was! An exciting, living and creative metropolis!

H. N. Semjon May, 2012