

***Pneuma-tacs* by Renate Hampke**

After several years of artistic experimentation with discarded bicycle tubes, Renate Hampke's creative activity has culminated in this second solo-exhibition at Semjon Contemporary. Only occasionally further working material, she has been working with for about two years, as i.e. soap or remnants of it, is employed by the artist.

Placed on a narrow base are more or less loosely rolled up bicycle tubes that protrude beyond the edge of the base, generating various compositions to expand into the room. The base does not simply –as is usually the case – serve the purpose of upvaluation, but is through this type of display with one or two bicycle tubes combined into a formal unity. This unifying aspect is also emphasized by painting the lower edge of the base with rising and falling triangles. At the same time this painterly intervention intensifies the notion of deconstructing the classical concept of a base, and at least formulates a new aesthetic experience, through this application of colour interweaving it with the black tubes to become as single, coherent form.

The sequencing or repetition of the principle – stele and protruding tube object – suggests that the artist fathoms the diverse possibilities to redefine the charged relationship between base and object, or rather examine it from every angle. Assembling various socle sculptures in one room appears like a composition of differing forms (tube objects) and the effect is even enhanced by the upward and downward movement of the socle painting that adds a certain rhythm to the ensemble.

The frailty of the tube material is thus neutralized by a strong sense of dignity emanating from each object. Through the artistic treatment of a seemingly worthless material a metamorphosis is initiated by the artist, giving it a new identity and form, breathing, as it were, new life into it. Moreover, the objects in their strong presence and frailty have an aggressive effect, as the black cable ties make them appear dangerous, generating a defense reaction. The ends of the cable ties pierce the air like stings or thorns. The sting of this threatening gesture, however, is taken out again, because the artist, like a rogue, integrates materials atypical for art use as *trouvailles*: liquorice, a synthetic pompom, and pieces of soap or even a door lock with key.

The artist directs our attention to the entire ensemble of stele-tube-objects, at the same time offering to experience the beauty of the rough, worn material in its surface structure and new form as well.

At this point mention should be made of her artistic photographs from 2012 (some of them can be seen in the gallery's *small showroom*), which are evidence of an artistic transfer from material and form to a carefully composed picture that makes the concept of beauty artistically plausible, thus strengthening it, and, at the same time, masks the olfactory aspect of the tubes and soaps, leaving the observer only guess.

The artist's contrapposto staging of the violet wall object from 1999 is made of pure foam foil as it is used for construction work and can be bought in a DIY store. Attached to it are colourful soap remnants from her collection of soaps, gathered with the help of her friends. Thus a gaily coloured, affirmative artwork is created, attesting to her spiritual independence. Thus she combines materials that are completely different in nature and still have one thing in common: they are all found items. The luminous colour accent of the soap slice confidently weakens the strong light-dark contrast of the *Pneuma-tacs*.

The artist Renate Hampke instinctively senses the unimportant and secondary aspects of our everyday world and wants to charge it with new life. Provided, of course, that the observer is open to that challenge. Already for the perception and reception of the *Arte Povera*, which the artist feels close to, this was a must. The consumed utility of an object is turned into a new aesthetic or surplus value, telling us about the value chain of the product materials and casually touching on the subject of sustainability when dealing with our resources.

Her combination sculptures/-objects, meaningful in many respects, that cannot be pinned down to a clear message, are close to Surrealism and bear in themselves a strong but sensitive poetic beauty.

It is hard to believe that these works with such a fresh and vibrant aura were created by an artist who has only recently celebrated her 80th birthday.

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