

Renate Hampke: *Fingered – Plain Frottage*
January 26 – February 24, 2018 (at *Straßen-Salon*)

Renate Hampke's third solo exhibition in the gallery focuses on the artist's graphic work – which is characterized also by certain painterly gesture.

In the past, some of her drawings on wood shown in the gallery had already appeared in other contexts, as for example in 2014 in the exhibition *Dear Artist, Please Draw for Me – Part I: Abstraction, Concretion, Notation and Structure* (cf. catalogue) or last year in the exhibition *Penetrating Paper*. The focus on her drawings, here with the use of wood as medium, may illustrate the wide range of her youngest studio productions.

In the series *Nackte Frottage/Plain Frottage* she mainly used graphite for drawing on the wooden surface, mostly poplar plywood, thereby exposing the cracks and tears of the surface or the edges of the upper veneer layer, the face side, so to speak. (cf. catalogue Renate Hampke, *Schlauchobjekte und Holzzeichnungen/Tube Objects and Drawings on Wood*, published in 2017 by Semjon Contemporary, including an essay by Jan Maruhn, pages 16, 20, 21 and 25). Using this technique, the artist brings to mind the previous life of the plywood panel or the raw material of wood, transforming the profane, plain-looking plywood into an image with a life of its own and *raison d'être*. One could also say that she turns the inside out. The artist clearly gains inspiration from the given wooden surface and intensifies the effect and pictorial idea owed to the wooden texture by additional hatching; and sometimes, she makes the edge of the veneer layer become the horizontal line. The series *Nackte Frottage/Plain Frottage* gains yet another facet through the use of charcoal instead of graphite. The pictures generally show a stronger black pigmentation and, at the same time, a coarser texture, because the charcoal stick does not penetrate the fine grains, smallest pores and scars, but rather slides over them.

Renate Hampke also uses discarded drawing boards, bringing them in direct confrontation with the charcoal and creating wall objects (cf. the exhibition *Nackte Frottage/Plain Frottage 5/2017*). Thereby, she consciously includes an ironic momentum, as the drawing boards are meant to serve as supports for the drawing paper, as tools for drawing on paper. She confidently turns the tables and works the drawing aid with the drawing material! With *Ode aus Japan/Ode from Japan* from 2015 (cat. p. 17) she builds a bridge to her sculptural work, as she combines the drawing board, densely covered with deep black charcoal, with her materials in the meantime regarded as classic, as for example bicycle tubes, soap and other found objects.

The title of the exhibition (*Gefingert/Fingered*, which is also a work title) already indicates the artistic orientation of this work. Indeed, the artist's body, more precisely her fingertip, functions as a tool, with the aid of which charcoal is applied onto the wooden surface. The artistic impetus is of fundamental importance here, although in the actual action of dancing with the finger on the wooden board the aspect of chance may also have played a role (pages 18, 19, 22 and 23). Using this technique Renate Hampke builds up a special relation between the materials of wood and charcoal, the impact of which outsiders can only imagine.

Starting from these 'finger drawings' another group of works has emerged, which is still in its early stages: the *Gold Finger* works. Instead of charcoal gold paint is applied onto black-coloured MDF panels. Depending on the existing lighting situation or sun position, the gold paint shines and shimmers differently on the black ground, sometimes resembling white gold, sometimes rather fiery red.

New objects were also integrated into her cabinet exhibition in the gallery's left front room, as for example a *Tower of Knots (Knotenturm)* which rises in a vertical niche or two individual *Knotted Tubes (Schlauchknoten)* each on a small graphite-covered pedestal embedded into the small horizontal niche of the *SC Straßen-Salon*. These find their match in objects combining black grinding discs on poplar wood pedestals and representing an additional abstract narrative momentum.

The ground sculpture *Successive Halves/Sukzessive Hälften* (p. 11; 2015), which may be called the veteran among her previous tube objects and sculptures, complements her new creations and links these, together with *Ode from Japan/Ode aus Japan*, with her previous work.

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