



Objects & Items

Stefanie Seufert – Stefan Panhans

Opening: 17.01.2013, 18 Uhr

Exhibition: 18.01.2013- 05.03.2013

Press release

The title „Objects & Items“ is giving a direct and clear hint on the subjects of the images on display within the double exhibition by Stefan Panhans and Stefanie Seufert: Objects, items: common things.

That those objects, items, things have been photographed, above all in a very neutral and factual way by Stefanie Seufert and with a very concentrative and objective view through the camera by Stefan Panhans, is telling us that the artists want to guide us to the crux of the assumption of those common objects and items, to their innate constitution. The more it seems paradox that in their photographs indeed everything is pictured in a very transparent way and shown with high precision, but nevertheless it seems impossible to unfold in a concise way what the artists let us see. Both artists have in common that through their photographic praxis they break up with a pictorial language that seems to be stable and thereby question the prevalent logic of representation to which photography is still bounded. So in the centre of their visual strategy stands exactly not the disclosure or the aestheticisation of the real, rather they are working constantly with the uncertainty in the relation between visibility and reality.

Stefan Panhans and Stefanie Seufert are referring in their works with a striking preciseness to iconographic conventions: They quote the genre of still- life, as well as object - and studio – photography, and set links to architectural- and landscape – photography that complete both wide photographic oeuvres. Working with a methodically very strict formalistic approach, high image sharpness, neutral light and a objective camera angle, both artists aim for a kind of hyperpresence of the real, a hyperpresence of the factual. Through subtle signs or interventions in the process of exposure (Seufert) or through the way the objects and items are combined to each other (Panhans), the photographed subjects appear simultaneously ambivalent: The artists combine their works with an enormously fine sense for formal correspondence or compose them as serial sequences, so that they elude a direct readability, on the contrary: Though everything in their photographs is presented always in a neutral- factual way and without any effort of staging, the motifs seem enigmatic (Seufert), mannered or partly exaggerated into a grotesqueness (Panhans).

Typical for Stefanie Seufert´s works are the visual easily comprehensible, nevertheless aesthetically hybrid constructions of the image-space and within this the subtle directed presence of the object, as well as the revealing of the photographic process. Here one can see her reconceiving and comparing approach of rethinking photography as an ostensibly objectifying method of representation.

The spectators of her object-studies are left uncertain about the actual nature of the photographed objects, about the nature of the gorgeous conifers (2006/2007) with their complete record of cultural traditions, or about the nature of the leftovers from a consumer's world that are presented in "things without a name" (2012), therefore about things that even do not have a name, that have never been signified. The objects that Stefanie Seufert found and photographed seem to be equally strange as well as emblematic. Seufert is thwarting with those images the emphatic faith in the objective exposure that is dominating the genre since its emergence in the 1920s: "By relying entirely on the chance (and the changing) appearance of the things and the openness of how they can be interpreted, Stefanie Seufert's works resist the concept of a complete domination of the image, much less a domination of information." (Florian Ebner) The strict orientation towards formal criteria, like the visual reduction, the negation of narration and the decision for a pure object-oriented representation, is filling the images with a mannered presence. This strategy is emphasising the hybrid character of her photographs that lead beyond the actual point of seeing and understanding to the oscillating border between vision and comprehension.

The enigmatic finding of the motif and the formalistic strictness that is characteristic for Stefanie Seufert's way of working is typical for Stefan Panhans's photographic praxis as well. Contrary to the visual structure of isolation that is obtained by Seufert through the depleting of the image-space, Panhans is working towards an extreme exposure of outwardness and is initiating scenic narrations (therefore his tableaux vivant like images from his since 2007 ongoing series of works are called "Items for Possible Video Sets"). Panhans is using permanently „out of the stock of a global market“, is referring to pop-culture, fashion, design, advertisement: to various consumeristic worlds. His goods and accessories are set often as threatening signs that are utilised in an adjuratory way and symbolically exaggerated. The images are revealing the reverse and the unconscious of the surrounding consumeristic world. His wall-filling installation "Concrete Run" (2012), that is on display now in Vienna and that is a combination of the series "Items for Possible Video Sets" and some works without a title, is full of stimulations for the demand of consume, even if: "the beautiful view on the luxurious design and the good form is over. It's art from the era of the financial crisis, the criminal hedge-fonds, the crash of the banks, the failure of the climate agreement, of the salary dumping, that is part of global markets. (...) The cute mesentery is a symbol for zeitgeist. The microphysics of the power of goods consists of aesthetic decoys and details." (Giselinde Nabakowski)

Even if the visual index, to which the photographs of Stefan Panhans and Stefanie Seufert refer to, are partly different – the dryness and the sometimes denying character of Seufert's photographs are contrasting with the strange and abysmal items of Panhans – their works have a laconic- ironic base in common, that both use to work towards a subtle manipulation of an alleged transparent view on the realness of things.