

Jytte Høy

something closer than small

Tables define our first impression of Jytte Høy's group of works called *something closer than small* (2000-2). Tables as displays for drawings, photos, models and other things. Depending on the exhibition room the artist has also at times elected to hang some sheets on the wall, whereby these are evidently merely satellites, dispatched from the table surfaces out into space.

It is no longer unusual today to present art on tables. Take Silvia Bächli, for example, who first showed her drawings thematically arranged on 'tables' in 1996 in Kunsthalle Bern. Or more correctly they were flat, elegant table display cases while Jytte Høy uses simple wooden workbenches, whose tops rest on height-adjustable bases. The horizontal form of presentation used encourages viewers to perceive the art from various perspectives, to explore them by walking around the tables. What Stefan Gronert terms a "stooped overview" conveys a strange sense of intimacy. More strongly than is the case with art as hung traditionally on walls, here viewers feel drawn into the artist's confidence. The exhibition space becomes something of a studio.

Tables invite us to look over the artist's shoulder during the *gradual composition of thoughts*. They underscore the working character of art, not in the sense of a result, but rather a process. In particular architecture, which is the product of lengthy and complex design processes, can be fittingly conveyed in this way. The Renzo Piano exhibition on the occasion of the opening of Fondation Beyeler 1997 arranged the exhibits on long desktops resting on trestles and in this way placed visitors in the very heart of the creative think-tank that is Piano's building workshop.

Jytte Høy also seeks to achieve this workshop character as expressed by workbenches. Even less pretentious than Silvia Bächli's table displays, as they have no glass and thus encourage the viewer to participate in her perceptual experiments. And because experiments generally take place in laboratories it is even admissible to recall that table, which in 1938 was the scene of the momentous discovery of nuclear

fission. Today, the latter table stands in the Deutsches Museum in Munich: “The source of the neutrons, a small paper bag containing uranium salt, a paraffin block to slow down the neutron radiation, an aspirator, absorption sheets, a small lead vessel and a measuring block of lead, anode batteries, amplifier, a Geiger counter and a counter” – thus reads the inventory of the workbench by Otto Hahn, Lise Meitner and Fritz Straßmann which Hahn later assembled in 1964 for the museum exhibit. Once again a table appeals to the visitors’ imagination, as they are put in a position to feel like scientists in a unique moment in the history of science.

Not only the unusual arrangement by which all square items lie parallel to the table edges recalls Jytte Høy. It is also the fact that this is a retrospective arrangement of objects used in the pioneering experiment but not a frozen authentic situation in the sense of a snare picture by Daniel Spoerri. In actual fact, the instruments and materials named were actually located in three different rooms of the Kaiser-Wilhelm Institute in Berlin at the time of the experiment.

Whether it is found, photographed or drawn, Jytte Høy also arranges her material after the event. It is only in combination that the impression of a functional connection arises, which is no less logical and comprehensible than that of the lab bench at Deutsches Museum. And as with the museum of science, her success is measured by the question of whether she succeeds to involve the viewer. The lead-in is as individual as the objects on the tables are varied. For one person it might be an architecture model that shows photos on its flat roof or facade, for another a photo, which is continued in a pencil drawing. The rope of a long suspension bridge, for example, the converging lines depicting the corner of a room with windows or perhaps simply the outline of one of the laminated photos.

One of the artist’s favorite working methods, namely continuing to draw, is symptomatic for her basic objective: Jytte Høy appropriates the visible world by continuing to weave it far beyond the sheet of paper or thing. Ariadne’s invisible thread connects the pictures and items that initially seem so disparate. What was discovered here, is also confirmed there. Topics are not specified in advance, but seem to simply develop. The artist speaks of a “flow“, a flow of observations and insights, and once we have given ourselves up to it neither eyes nor mind stop at the

table edges or the walls of the exhibition room. A small jointed doll, a distant relative of de Chirico's Manichino, sits on the edge of a table. Acting in our stead he turns his back on the completed course and glances out across the other tables far into the world.

Jytte Høy's art aims at what Rudolf Arnheim called "illustrative thinking", namely the "intelligence of seeing", the "perception as insight". While our everyday perception has to be "purposive and selective" the artist invites us to engage in walks of the thinking eye. It indulges itself between objects, found items and photographs and for valuable moments we feel in full possession of our perceptual powers. All the gates to the visible world stand wide open.

No question about significance prevents us from admiring the amazing point symmetries that arise when Jytte Høy combines two prints of the same photo in such a manner that one is upside down, and the images shift to such an extent that the shadow on an old wall, a passageway between two houses or a section of sky create striking shapes. The "seeing vision" of which art historian Max Imdahl once spoke triumphs here over "recognizing vision". With these inverted photos Jytte Høy reverses the Rohrschach Test: Instead of investigating abstract items in mirror symmetry to find concrete associations, she discovers the abstract in the concrete point symmetrical.

For instance, the four pointed star, which shines out of four identical photos of an avenue. Figure and background exchange roles. In the center is an empty space as large as one of the photos. "Fill with own imagination," Artur Kōpcke might have written there. Perhaps we see the missing photo in front of us: a look as if we were lying in the middle of a crossroads in a baroque garden complex and looked up at the sky.

This is perhaps the most beautiful thing about these promenades of seeing. The fact that a moral finger is never raised, that the experiments are not prefigured by a hypothesis but the outcome is fully open. Beyond all the limits of our conceptual thinking we enjoy – to cite Czesław Miłosz – "the entire incomprehensible, intangible

diversity of perceptible things.” And then nothing is to be excluded, not even something that is “closer than small”.

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