

## The ABC of touch

"[The Cheshire Cat] vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone"

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

They are small meditations, at once cheerful, defiant, absurd, stupid, childish. Often quite nasty too. Like the Cheshire Cat's grin they hang on the wall, after logic and rationality have evaporated. Self-contradictory juxtapositions of things that defy formulation in language. As works of art they have an outrageous tendency to refuse to cohere into whole statements, uncontradictory for the rational faculty, scattered as they are all around the walls like fragments of an exploded aesthetic. The creative premise is the fragment and the fruitless construction that denies legitimation and justification - you cannot quite get them to stand up for what they are.

The materiality of the objects is discreet and understated, but not without a certain rigour. They are base or ignoble materials - wood, cardboard, plaster, rubber bands, photographs etc. - things that unite in each of their short-circuited (or short-circuiting) statements. When the various fragments are placed side by side on the walls, each is a non sequitur which deconstructs fundamental distinctions like unity and separation, confirmation or refutation, true and false, absence and presence. Some of the objects latch on for an instant to particular functions or summary statements, but are based on deductions that have been skewed, or on false linkages or inferences. A three-quarter circle in wood with the inscription "95%" becomes a veritable politician: instant deniability, but clearly no regrets. Other objects hint at a scale or unit of measurement that appeals to our trust in mathematics or logic, but which soon proves to have skipped the calculations in between. Despite their paradoxical nature the objects are not expressions of a creative will that turns in on itself. Rather of a disquiet, or the kind of spite inherent in sarcasm.

The postulates of the objects - for they are, as implied above, stubbornly and persistently postulative, despite the unassuming materiality - oscillate from the trivial to the fatal to the poetic, and almost convince the observer of improbable connections. They pose as aids to awareness, but hasten to terminate this provisional status. An impropriety always comes into play: a trifle like a biscuit suddenly proves to have lethal culinary potential, for it is skewered by pins. Chew on that, chum. Small, apparently insignificant overlappings or shifts in the relationship between the physical entities and the two-dimensional sow the seeds of doubt about origins and causality. Or a consciousness of futility sets in when the observer is confronted by gestalts which transgress the boundaries of good, edifying art.

Jytte Høy's objects are small, frivolous paragraphs that have ensconced themselves like parasites in a sculptural logic. Each is a physical entity, but they do not seem to be closely associated with the atoms that sum up their materiality. Like lonely judges of fragile, temporary

communities, the objects hang on the wall, clearly with hard feelings about the abuse of art by power: there can be no question of grandeur, heroism or universality where any step in the direction of continuity is constantly deflected. The call to order of the great narratives, their neat first causes, their exigencies and correctives, are demoralized in their first principles.

There is a kind of freedom in the instant, direct communication of the objects. The accessible (unlike the elevated or the sublime, for example) is for Høy something more comprehensive than the word usually suggests. In this zone of freedom - from meaning? - the will to accept things is challenged by logical flaws or - quite simply - the stupid. As the objects lie open to the gaze and to the power of association, it as if the senses become a new morality that atones for the logical inconsistencies in the objects. The senses - here primarily sight - are more willing to accept mutations, bits and pieces, than the understanding. The objects end up playing an absurd game of ping-pong with the observer's attempts to understand: the objects are unbirths, antiphrases, unbecomings. The will to three-dimensional (un)construction is unyielding. You have to play it by ear. Constantly and consistently, the linguistic and rational clues that are built up are broken down again; but what reason cannot assemble - or cannot stomach, like the biscuit bristling with pins - is confirmed by the tactile. Where the evidence of the eye seems to clash with the flaw in the logic, the senses must pay off an old debt for rationality. The objects are therefore not really psychologically uncomplicated: they are prefigurations of a different knowledge, elements in the ABC of touch.

When we use the term "fragment", it normally involves the absence of a totality, and describes the artistic longing to construct beautifully, truly and correctly on an indisputable, aesthetic-rational basis. There is a touch of melancholy in this use of the concept. For Jytte Høy the fragments are nodal points in the impossibility of creating in a self-enclosed artistic perspective; the will to create the Immortal Masterpiece has been derailed and undermined, and its components now feature in an awry, humorous play of combinations. We might ask whether in Høy's case the fragment is really the expression of a longing (for homogeneity, for truth), or whether it is rather a statement of the conditions for creating and experiencing: the fragment in its own right as a corrective to our urge to banish the senses to a lower order in a hierarchy with the rational at the top; and to our wish to see history as something linear and logically progressing. Above all, it stresses the risk involved in regarding the fictions and constructs we make of ourselves and our lives as uncontaminated, whole and given. The objects are moments in the narratives with which we qualify our lives temporally. The basic sense of scale within which we view our lives is challenged by the skewed mirror images in the no-man's land between the sensual and the rational.

*Lars Bang Larsen*