

Isabella Kohlhuber, Esther Stocker

Encounters

Vernissage 23.07.2015, 19h

24.07. – 20.09.2015

Project and introduction: Victoria Dejaco

The series of exhibitions developed for Galleria Doris Ghetta is part of a bigger corpus of exhibitions, focusing on interpersonal relations between the curator, the artist and the viewer aiming to intensify the level of closeness these involved parties can share. As suggested in the title, *Encounters* brings together artists who have never worked with each other but either follow each others work, or have some other kind of link prior to this project. Hence, each exhibition develops in close collaboration with the artists and has a long lead-time, so that there is enough room for exchange and growth.

Some of the main aspects of my curatorial practice involve the slowing down in pace, creating space for thoughts and emptiness in order to concede to the viewer a possibility to indulge in the art work. The artists who I work with share this interest. Therefore it comes to no surprise, that for the second time, the artists conceived of a seating accommodation inviting the viewer to linger and dwell on the work around him. This time it is one of the gallery's own display forms, designed by architect Igor Comploi. The returning visitor knows these modular forms in various positions, lying or standing, painted in black or white. Their character is quite akin to the basic ideas the two artists are working with.

Isabella Kohlhuber and Esther Stocker both work in very different media but quarrel with similar issues. Isabella met Esther in 2005 when the latter gave a presentation on her work and they connected over sign and system theory. In the juxtaposition of these two practices lie new accesses for the viewer. At times as obvious as the quality of the textures of both their surfaces, at times in a more complex way: What is the connection between Isabella's pipes and Esther's grids? Might the connection be an infinitely expandable system of singular elements?

Over the years Esther Stocker has developed a particular signature. The grid, the irregularities, the deceit and irritation are challenges for our perception. Her works put into questions the definitions of pater and ground, order and disorder. How do we define one and the other? Is one conditioning the other? Esther herself pointed out: "I have great confidence in these forms which can indicate a formal paradox, where language can, if at all, only come close."

The doubt of language's reliability bridges both positions. Our alphabet consists of a relative number of signs. Since we learnt to read them, we can rely on them to make sense to us. Nonetheless, there is less certainty in words than in images. The word ball can have two meanings depending on its context. Those loose relations between the things and a representative system, are being thematized in Isabella's font "Bastards" which morphs different parts of letters to new ones. This counter draft juxtaposes a more flexible and adaptable system to the rigid one of the common alphabet in order to better represent

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language, which is alive and constantly changing. Not to anyone's surprise the quote on the wall refers to the definition of things in a book that Esther recommended to Isabella some years back.¹

Isabella's works make inquiries into systems, the laws they follow, their error sources and inefficiencies. In her line drawings every irregularity caused by a thought or a breath drawn is captured on the paper and inscribes itself onto the following lines. The final result is a mesh in which the single line becomes indistinguishable. This play with perception peaks in Esther Stocker's work *Sehen als* (2000). In it, the artist draws a grid on her eyeball with an eyeliner pencil. The grid usually laid onto an object or used as auxiliary in constructing perspective on a surface is directly applied onto the visual organ transforming it radically into an a priori changing the parameters of perception fundamentally.

Isabella's video *Ohne Titel (Robot)* (2015) has a different take on the automated movement than the line drawings but comes from a similar starting point. The robot arm swiftly picks up balls from the floor, which lie there as densely as a carpet. The texture slowly thins out until only few balls out of reach remain and the grid underneath is revealed. Similar to Esther's variations of black and white grids, and equally similar to the line drawings very few rules result in an innumerable number of possible movements for the robot that reinstalls order.

Victoria Dejaco

¹ George Spencer Brown, *Laws of Form*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1969.