

Kirsten Pieroth

Events and Guises

29.04. - 03.06.2018

Opening reception: 29.04.2018 6-9 PM

"...for the lion, as opposed to man, has no need to disguise his actions, he hunts and seizes his prey as himself... the intention, of one body onto another, irreversibly begins with the moment of touch... from then on, man's desperate attempts at escaping the incorporation into a larger, predatory body leads to the inevitable arrest in life..."

(paraphrases from an unknown source, as remembered by the artist)

Mathew Gallery is pleased to announce the first solo exhibition of works by German artist Kirsten Pieroth in New York. The artist presents a series of new works that mark Pieroth's longstanding interest in the human condition and its subsequent psychological, physical and communal aspects.

The central work of the exhibition, *Abrasives (Olympus)*, 2018 comprises of a series of forty-seven pages of the Sunday edition of the German newspaper 'Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung', onto which the artist has printed sequences of various objects, food and physical actions (mostly devotional in nature - kneeling or knocking) to record notions of the modern self, as well as the abrasion, both in a metaphorical and in a physical sense, of the modern self in today's society. Headlining the series is a print of a flow roll massage roller, uncannily resembling a prison bar or cagelike structure, which is printed onto a portrait of the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, whom the artist has referenced in previous works. Schopenhauer's well known proclamation of Sunday as the day that exemplifies most the ennui and general boredom of the bourgeois amidst the surplus, is used here by the artist as a backdrop for the piece. The title *Olympus* might not only refer to the mythological heaven of gods, but also the human condition as seen through various stages of self conditioning. Visually appearing like an overloaded set of scribblings, the piece unfolds like a modern day polyptych. In this vein, the artist's notion of a contemporary vineyard in the work *Grapes (Olympus)*, 2018 appears in the guise of an electricity mast.

The dystopian sentiment of *Events and Guises* is enhanced further by the work *Panorama*, 2018, made from a washing machine drum, in which an amalgamation of once red, yellow, blue and white lacquer has been splashed onto its interior walls by the physical action of the spin cycle of the machine. Whereas the shutters of the drum raise open, alternating between joy, longing, despair or even more grotesquely, a winged consumer product (as if reimagining one of Hieronymus Bosch's haunting creatures), the title suggests a panoramic insight into a claustrophobic experience from within the walls of the drum. Based on a washing machine's promise of continual rejuvenation, a concept similar to that of the fountain of youth, to turn the old, dirty and used back into the new, brilliant and fresh, the artist placed pure colors inside the drum to unhinge this concept by introducing the viewer to a new color scale that has been violently forced to depart from its course of origins by being subjected to the distorting rotations of society's machineries.

A similar motif is explored in a series of smaller plaster sculptures, titled *Seven Studies for a Mouth and a Hand*, 2018. Again, the viewer is confronted with a resonating body, or rather, a body expected to be resonating, albeit silently devouring, thus the objects are an essentially hollow and square embodiment, suspended between predatory desires and despair, abundance and abandonment, lock and release, consuming and being consumed. These rudimentary sculptures appear as figures reduced to grimacing mouth-pieces and what could be seen as jaws. The question that arises with these works, being based on deformed product encasings, is the duality of feeding and eating, as evident in all human interactions and societal endeavours. The roughly patched sculptures offer varying glimpses into the depths of their interior selves, and seem to express various states of need, greed, desire, longing, satisfaction and discontent. Loosely assembled on the floor, they appear like haunting spirits or shades, while a hand that rests amongst them has been reduced to an empty stump.

The notion of the circular reoccurs throughout the show, and is introduced again in the work *Vertigo (It is your flesh that I wear)*, 2018. For this work the artist has printed a set of mattress bedsprings, stripped bare from their fabric skin, onto a white sheet of paper. The print testifies to the rather inquisitory nature of the inner workings of an object outwardly designed for recline, rest and recovery. Presented upright, an invisible self seems embossed into the matrix of an industrial landscape, and the skeletal physicality of the structure echoes a sense of trembling and anxiety by lacking a clear focal point, as if in constant motion blur. The tilted object, with its diminishing contours, stands here like a fragile frame for a vanished figure, a body that cannot be recovered. The paper itself, acting like a bedsheet with stains, creases and holes, suggests the violation on the human condition performed by the taste of metal.

The artist's acute sense for the implications of materials becomes further elaborated in *Neukölln*, 2018. For this, the artist gathered preowned wooden floorboards and roof construction materials in Berlin to build a bench, a work that alludes to a series of early works by the artist and is a recurring motif in her practice. The notion of imported, often exotic woods is here manipulated to the abject, given the rather desolate condition of the boards and their original location in one of Neukölln's worker's housings. By physically raising the boards to a higher level, the work not only prepares the ground itself while questioning concepts of our human need for settlement, but also elevates the evolutionary process from the hunter and gatherer to the bourgeois onto a questionable pedestal.

Paul Francis

The text follows a conversation with the artist.