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Galerie

EVA BERENDES

Figures & Routines

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The grid combines diagrammatic presence and functional versatility. In painting, its deployment once amounted to an optical policy statement, prompting Rosalind Krauss' observation that the grid is what art looks like the moment it turns its back on nature.¹

Eva Berendes takes up the eponymous pattern as an embodiment of two-dimensional space. In her series *Grids* she presents a variety of things – “raw” materials, industrially manufactured components, quotidian and handcrafted objects – on hand-welded metal lattices. It is this rigid structure that gives rise to a sense of relatedness between the seemingly dissimilar items.

Disengaged from their functional contexts, a hand-dyed scarf and a sheet of polyurethane reveal a peculiar kinship. Folksy and industrial artefacts, the unique and the infinitely reproducible, but also abstract and figurative elements, crop up as but stages of a gradual development rather than irreconcilable opposites within the field of Berendes' compositions.

A close reading of the various assemblages reveals certain principles with respect to selection and placement: each group of five items includes particular formal, material, and denotative qualities that perform alternations between transparency and opacity, or between rigid and supple matter, to name just a few. The pictorial repertory hints at two painterly traditions. Vessels, floral ornaments and textiles invoke still life's tableware, flower decorations, and drapery, whereas triangular, square, and circular shapes dominate the vocabulary of non-representational art.

The grid's neutrality renders it an arena² within which a picture can be enacted. Harold Rosenberg's much-cited description of the canvas as a performative frame aptly describes the quality of Berendes' trellises. Unfolding as a deliberate but open-ended process, the scenery's formation proceeds as a continuous re-arranging of objects on their supporting structure. The chain of decisions regarding proportion and relation implies the artist's body that transcribes its own range of movement upon its vertical counterpart. Berendes' experimental set-up confronts a virtually unlimited quantity of materials – lacking any objective criteria, the artist must make her choice purely based on her personal discretion. Consequently, the choice of materials extends the act of composition, while the objects' positioning turns out to be the proverbial walk on the tightrope, with each introduced item newly inflecting the whole setting. Balancing the 'what' and 'how' determines whether or not a relationship evolves between the sum and its parts.

Eva Berendes studied in Munich, Berlin and London and currently lives in Berlin. She exhibited in various international solo- and group shows, including Witte de With, Rotterdam (NL), Museum of Modern Art, Vienna (AU), Hara Museum, Tokyo (JP), Bielefelder Kunstverein (DE), de Vleeshal, Middelburg (NL), S1 Artspace, Sheffield (UK), Kettle's Yard, Cambridge (UK) and Daimler Collection, Berlin (DE).

Until April 14, 2013 her work is on show at Nur hier, Sammlung zeitgenössischer Kunst der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Ankauf von 2007 bis 2011 at Bundeskunsthalle Bonn (DE).

¹ „The grid states the autonomy of the realm of art. Flattened, geometricized, ordered, it is antinatural, antimimetic, antireal. It is what art looks like when it turns its back on nature.”, in: Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, The MIT Press 1986, 9f.

² „At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act – rather than a space in which to reproduce, redesign, analyze or 'express' an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event.”, in: Harold Rosenberg, *The American Action Painters*, 1952.