

Nairy Baghramian

"Fluffing the Pillows"

November 9th 2012 - January 5th 2013

Opening reception on Friday, November 9th, 2012, 7-9 pm

Under the title "Fluffing the Pillows" we are happy to announce the second solo exhibition of Nairy Baghramian at Galerie Buchholz. Nairy Baghramian's works were in recent years shown in solo and group exhibitions in international institutions. Solo shows by the artist took place at Kunsthalle Basel (2006), Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (2008), Neuer Aachener Kunstverein (2008), Serpentine Gallery London (2010) and the Contemporary Art Gallery Vancouver (2012). Nairy Baghramian's works were also featured at Skulpturenprojekte Münster (2007) and the Venice Biennial (2011). In January 2013 Nairy Baghramian will present a new installation at Sculpture Center, New York.

The artist Nairy Baghramian (*1971 in Isafahan, lebt in Berlin) has been awarded with this year's Hector Kunstpreis of the Kunsthalle Mannheim. The installation that Nairy Baghramian now presents in both Cologne gallery spaces is a modified and extended version of her exhibition at the Kunsthalle. On the occasion of the exhibition in Mannheim an artist book in the shape of a boats magazine has been published.

Excerpts from: Andre Rottmann, "Nairy Baghramian – Sculpture as a Provisional Space Filler", in: Boats Magazine, exh. cat. Kunsthalle Mannheim, 2012, S. 50-63:

[Two hooks] that are installed as sculptures without a base are the largest of this group of unique individual pieces. As the work's title, "Moorings" (2012), would seem to suggest, the five hooks made of cast aluminium might just as easily be used for tying up boats in a harbour. In point of fact, their shape is derived from those hooks seen on the sort of cranes used for loading and unloading containers. [...]
In "Fluffing the Pillows" [...] the [...] works described above [are] joined by several amorphous objects that spread horizontally over the floor [...]. The artist based in Berlin has stuffed patterned and monochrome cloth sacks with mineral wool and building materials that have set in the meantime. These sculptures are called "Silos" (2012), which emphasises the point that Baghramian regards them primarily as receptacles for diverse materials, and that their changing forms are the product of the entropic distribution of what each of them contains. Even though their bulges, folds and buckling may call to mind associations with 'soft sculptures', they are, in fact, solid and stable. Nonetheless, it would appear that they require support in some form. In those cases when they are not attached to the "Moorings" using straps made of artificial leather and rubber-coated cords, rather delicate constructions made of chrome-plated aluminium poles called "Gurneys" (2012) are employed to support the formless sacks on the floor. This English word, which describes a stretcher on wheels, further emphasises the tension and contrast between the rigid supports made of metal and the figures made of fabrics that seem so floppy at first glance – a tension that is a crucial element in the concept and installation of Baghramian's exhibition. While the "Moorings" all have the same signal colour, only traces of their original pattern can be seen on the textiles used to cover the "Silos".

Baghramian evidently bleached out the original dyed colours and designs. In other cases, the fabrics are entirely colourless, although some parts have been coated with thick rubber, in a manner reminiscent of the way this substance is used on boats and yachts to repel water.

In her exhibition [...] Baghramian has therefore presented contrasting and conflicting material, morphological and discursive sculptural elements and co-ordinates: sharply delineated hollow forms made of metal that – within the art-historical trajectory extending from Constantin Brâncuși to Richard Serra – might be associated with the masculine paradigm of industrial production are grouped with objects made of fabrics and padding that have been made by hand and which, as successors of positions once taken by artists like Louise

Bourgeois and Claes Oldenburg, are bound to evoke more feminine connotations. However, the import of Baghramian's latest exhibition – just like that of all of the work she has produced during the last decade – extends far beyond the mere repetition of such oppositions and contrasts. Rather, "Fluffing the Pillows" is an attempt to set both poles in motion simultaneously while going beyond the strategies of pastiche or parody. In her choice of colour, Baghramian thus lends the hooks a decorative aspect, which is most definitely not the case (as it so often is) with respect to the fabric-covered pieces that distantly recall cushions yet seem to elude any attempt to pin them down to a particular shape or to lend them a more elaborated form. In contrast, in their role as holders of the cloth sacks, the hooks are given a function that undermines their autonomy as self-sufficient objects, with the result that they oscillate between display modules and genuine artworks, whereas the Silos – in spite of their formal proximity to those seat-like objects seen in quasi-participational art projects (like those of Franz West) – utterly lack the quality of sturdy usefulness and seemingly even have to be held in place by the rods of the "Gurneys".

Using this method involving reflexive inversion of dominant paradigms of the sculptural that is [...] fundamental to Baghramian's working practice, "Fluffing the Pillows" also clearly reveals that, for her, artistic production cannot be separated either from the specific context of an exhibition or from the social and economic status of aesthetic objects [...].

In a world in which wares, goods and services are constantly on the move and globally accessible, Baghramian's works [...] would seem to imply that sculptures do not have a permanent location, either. Rather, the interior space of a museum is just one single stopping point in an endless route of transit that aesthetic objects are transported along. They are merely hung up and given a brief airing from time to time. At the same time, art institutions are just one of many contexts in which one might have the sort of experiences that used to be called aesthetic but, in the meantime, have become largely determined by the controlling regimes imposed by design, fashion and other branches of the various facets of the culture industry. It is for this very reason that Baghramian's works [...] do not present themselves to the viewer as anachronistic remnants. Instead, they seem to have derived their rather willful forms not only from an awareness of their art-historical predecessors but also from discernment of the fact that, within the broader field of object relationships, sculpture has to compete with other luxury goods and leisure attractions. "Fluffing the Pillows" accordingly has an aura of maritime cosmopolitanism. Thus, the critical consideration of contemporary art – this is made evident in the present catalogue, for which Baghramian boarded a specialist magazine for boating and sailing – owes as much to interest as to privileges. [...]