

Irina Lotarevich
Modular Woman

27.01. -
11.03.2023

The *Sichtlagerkasten* is a semi-open front storage container that can be stacked to provide maximum efficiency and easy accessibility when organising contents of various kinds. *Sicht* is the German word for sight, visibility, a prospect. *Lager* the word for store, stock, but also the camp. A *Kasten* is a box, though it is also a showcase. As an elemental form that gives shape to a number of works in the exhibition, the proliferating *Sichtlagerkästen* demonstrate the ways in which processes of configuration and constellation can generate difference through repetition. As a conceptual container, however, the *Sichtlagerkasten* performs less as binary code than as social encryption. Condensed into its relatively simple form are multiple metaphors and interpretative possibilities: for the body, the mind, a social body, and the interactions facilitated or precluded between all of these.

The standardness of the *Sichtlagerkasten*, as it is employed by Irina Lotarevich to compose her works' different forms, engenders a modular system. With this, Lotarevich re-en-genders the architectural monolith that is Le Corbusier's *Unité d'habitation*, designed according to an anthropomorphic scale of proportions known as the Modulor. Originally based on the average French man's height at the time (1.75cm), the Modulor grew to 1.83cm in 1946: the six-foot stature embodied by English detectives in novels. This masculine ideal is troubled by the work's title – *Housing Anxiety 7* – which stirs the purely rational individual to consider more carefully the precarity of housing and the housing of instability. Or, to put it another way: to really feel the shortcomings of a standard universal. Or in other words entirely: to inhabit the space of the Modular Woman.

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The Modular Woman would be neither a prescriptive nor a descriptive argument about any particular notion of the woman but perhaps only a transitory self-portrait in an array of different metals, using different techniques, referring to different situations and modes of self-regard. Lotarevich draws from aspects of her working life to create works that reflect the conditions of their production. For *Overtime and Pedagogy*, for example, she collects shavings from the bandsaw in the university metal workshop where she works, presenting them in frames assembled on a curved mount, where each individual frame accounts for a week of teaching. When filed together, the frames materialise time, accumulating into something more than just debris: an archive of multiple dimensions, depending on one's viewpoint. *Steel Price Index* reproduces the table of contents in the Posamentir catalogue on a piece of steel the length of the artist's height. In this tumultuous geopolitical moment, the indexical work that this proxy catalogue can perform becomes contingent upon the artist's relative position in time and space, as she acquires her materials in a highly volatile market.

The relativity of the artist's position is parsed across the works in the exhibition through shifts in scale and perspective. The large-scale sculptural installation *Modular Body (container ship cross-section)* is still a miniaturised, cropped representation of the container ship. Its containers are also *Sichtlagerkästen*, stacked with reference to the precise calculations with which actual container ships are organised in order to maximise the potential cargo. Meanwhile, *The social box*, complex, constructed, hardware and software, often closed, sometimes open, constant and variable fixes the *Sichtlagerkasten* form into an oblique, two-dimensional image, cast as flat, silver charms. The chains connecting these to a central ring are variable

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lengths and adaptable to different situations, like a site-responsive schematic drawing. The title is taken from Michel Serres' 2008 book, *The Five Senses*, a work of active striving against the Cartesian dualism that makes universal standards like the Modular so seductive for their seeming viability across different applications, from science and technology, to architecture, to sociology and psychology, and beyond.

All the while, a particular figure within the exhibition, also reproduced mechanically by way of casting, challenges the anthropocentric viewpoint from which scalability and organisation becomes a solely human concern. The small, tin- and silver-cast pigeons perched on *Housing Anxiety 7* and the smaller wall sculpture *Unit* respectively introduce to the exhibition the fact of cohabitation in matters of life, living and the production of space. Lotarevich refers to the pigeon figures as though they were semiotic devices, included here to strengthen the allusion to a residential situation. Moreover, as creatures renowned for their homing abilities, their innate sense of orientation and their resilience, pigeons interpolate human environments to act as reminders of their permeability and sympoietic latencies. Not unlike the Modular Woman, the pigeon overflows the contained unit, inhabiting the interstices and making connections between diverse spaces and contexts, thus turning islands into archipelagos and units into dwellings.

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Glossary of Possible Digressions

Box: Having realised I could not think outside of it, I only thought about it and little to nothing else

Charm: A quality that dots and oozes, like blood

Container: More capacity to hold than to restrain, or vice versa

Economy: The more I have the less I need

Index: All smoke and no fire makes the message only a little elusive

Inflation: A problem of the ego by which I mean the me is all but half of them

Modular: A problem of the ego by which I mean the me is nothing but one more piece of them

Overtime: Understanding one's place in the world is not here, not now

Pigeon: For the shoddiness of its nest, the hole is all encompassing

Price: Not quite a sacrifice but not far off

Scale: The less I need the more I have

Steel: A look that pierces, not devoid of charm

Unit: Made up of constituent parts, I thought myself almost whole

Woman: Almost whole

Miriam Stoney