

Anne Bourse: *Old People Smoking*

29.01. – 30.04.2023

Kunsthalle Bremerhaven

All artists make the space in which they exhibit their own. Anne Bourse, however, occupies it in a special way, for she appears to transform the exhibition space, which is public, into a private one. Yet it remains public, even though it plays with privacy. This apparent paradox marks something that is characteristic of Anne Bourse's art: ambivalence and the vulnerability that goes with it.

Bourse's interest lies somewhere in these private or, to be more precise, social spaces, in which intimacy occurs and desire comes to light. The glass entrance door to the Kunsthalle is already covered by a curtain, so that the usual view to the inside is obstructed. What otherwise signals openness and invites the visitors to enter the rooms suddenly becomes a "barrier." Or, seen the other way around: What takes place inside is screened from the outside and protected against intruding gazes. With mattresses, lamps and blankets, the show contains further objects suggesting a private space. Placed next to them—like a room inside a room or an echo of the real room that Bourse created for the Kunsthalle—are models or fragments of models of other spaces: social locations like nightclubs or hotel hallways; places, then, that bear the promise of intensity.

Bourse's works start with a broad range of references usually drawn from pop culture, like the cult series "Columbo" or "The Simpsons" or the legendary, former Parisian nightclub "Le Palace." Resembling a poetic web woven out of Bourse's personal desires and obsessions, these references permeate the entire exhibition and are embedded in the artist's highly idiosyncratic, aesthetic universe. Her works and exhibitions are replete with certain pastel colors, painted mirror surfaces and textiles (usually silk) as well as recurring patterns and motifs (stripes in Bremerhaven). The artist's working method is extremely meticulous and repetitive. She creates her pieces by applying paint innumerable times to the underlying material in a reiterative, monotone and excruciating process that can take hours or days, and by the tedious production of objects with tools and methods she does not master but appropriates by watching DIY videos on YouTube. Hence, a temporal dimension as well as performative and artisanal elements are inscribed in her works. It's as if she were intent on narrating something very slowly and on narrating it herself. Here, too, a struggle for intensity can be sensed, namely, the desire to go through something, to personally experience something, and in doing so, to occasionally abandon oneself—even if it is ambivalent, at once satisfying and painful. What she creates here, however, are not "real" carpets, "real" lamps, "real" mirror walls or Tiffany windows, but only her fantasies. The mattresses made of silk, for example, are totally unsuitable for actual use.

Bourse's exhibition can perhaps be best described as a space of colors and fantasies made out of personal passions and interests. But it also points beyond this. Referring to social

spaces, which the visitors link to their own experiences, but which are also culturally charged by movies, literature and the like having inscribed a promise in them, the viewers are thrown back on their personal, albeit culturally and socially conditioned, fantasies and desires. The repetitions, shifts and nestlings of colors, motifs and materials condensing in the works also allow one to simply drift through the exhibition.

“Old People Smoking” at the Kunsthalle Bremerhaven is Anne Bourse’s first institutional solo show in Germany, curated by Stefanie Kleefeld.

Events

Saturday, February 18, 2023, 2 pm

»Kinderclub« Children Art Club with Ludmilla Euler

Thursday, March, 23, 2023, 6 pm

Talk about the works of Anne Bourse with Oriane Durand (Kunstverein Bielefeld) and Stefanie Kleefeld (Kunsthalle and Kunstmuseum Bremerhaven)

Saturday April 22, 2023, 5 pm

»Finissage«

Guided tour with Julia Bokermann

Performance by Benjamin Seror

The show is sponsored by:

Seestadt Bremerhaven

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