

**Ilona Stutz
von Welt**

02 – 30 September, 2023

Ilona Stutz is a Swiss artist living in Zurich and Bern. After studying philosophy and mathematics, she worked in a technology-oriented environment for a while before turning towards art. Stutz designs and communicates. Her interest lies in the relationship between the individual and the structures it inhabits and which in turn are inherent to it. In order to visualize these relationships and to make them tangible in a spatial environment, she works with different media, in particular linguistics, text and language. She appropriates language and signs from the public sphere, recontextualizes them and thereby assigning them with new meaning. The development of a work usually starts with a found object or sentence, which she then morphs through manipulation of scale, repetition, abstraction as well as the occasional accident. Artistic co-creation forms an essential part of Ilona Stutz's practice, and she has initiated and worked with different collectives including {F_x Office} with Elza Sile or the Zurich off-space unanimous consent.

von Welt explores the roles that entities can occupy through space and time. Whether through a counterweight, a mango, or a man peeling a mango, Stutz demonstrates the ambivalence and often contradiction of our place in the world. From the derivatives of stone reliefs and electric fans to the resurrection of packaging and recycled materials, value takes on new forms and ways to manifest itself.

Under the cultural and actual presence of the *valore cambiati*, the manifestation of value and meaning seems to permeate the exhibition space. It appears and dissolves temporally by the wear and tear of time, or by the cruel removal of an object's principal function. But maybe, the reappropriation of those said objects is a reaffirmation of their newfound value. When a functional value is removed, a potential value seems to bubble up. The simple presence of readopted objects suggests the potential for a story elsewhere. What exists here, lacks somewhere else; and hence, the object's value appears from sheer existence.

Throughout Stutz's space, value shapeshifts into different forms. The mango, the most recurrent element throughout von Welt, acts out into the multiplicity of its meanings. It is a fruit of the world, shipped to the hands of a Bernese man; it is the subject of an interaction between two gargoyle-like creatures; it is the succulent dish of some sparkling, beauty-filtered flies. If the mango takes on a passive role in all these circumstances, it is possibly because values seem to be pressed upon, rather than taken up.

Stutz's works throughout the exhibition exist simply until they are observed and are assigned an inherent meaning and value. This process of imprinting a value is unconscious, but very real. Like a tag of the FCZ, marking a passageway. Similar to the carving of some letters on a recycled wooden door. Stutz demonstrates two things through these tags: firstly, tagging offers a sign, turned into a symbol which itself dissolves itself into culture through storytelling; secondly, tagging itself can evolve beyond a process of value assignment. Tattooed on tapfulor #1,#2 and #5, the FSC packaging tells itself of different potential storylines, as the cardboard sculptures stretch themselves into new roles and personas.

Standing in the focal point of von Welt, might just make that lane switch reminds us of an anxiety we might encounter with time and efficiency: we witness the mangoes rot down the four meter tower. Their fate seems obvious to us, but here, Stutz suggests that our prediction should be questioned as well. Time is a determinant factor in the changing nature of our values and how we assign them; we are equally dependent on it as are Stutz's works through the exhibition. The tower obliges us to come back and check on the mangoes again. Their fate, and hence future value, might be different from our assumptions.

Stutz's understanding of potentiality flows through the exhibition, and out of it. In the corner of thought i'd something more to say, the exhibition is left open like a door ajar. The metallic counterweight peers through, almost ghostly. arithmetic-arimetock suggests the breakdown of the exhibition walls and pushes its limits of further. port hangs high one of the exhibition walls, with the mango tower, they extend space beyond what we expect the exhibitory space to be.

von Welt pushes and dilates our understanding of space and time through the sheer presence and interactions the works of Stutz create by their inherency. Our place as observers is vital to this unfolding, as we not only determine the shape and flow of these narratives, but become part of them in the larger context of the world. We are wondering: what might be our imperative to the slice of mango in our hands?

Text: Alex Karapancsev