

Karin Sander's genius consists in coming up with simple ideas that lead to wonderful results. At least the ideas appear simple, though their realization is sometimes a technically highly complex process that may take years to complete. But every time, the result is always a kind of magical mechanism that incessantly commands the observer's attention. One could label Karin Sander's art "so what art". Most of it can be described in half a sentence, but as soon as it is realized and subject to our, literally, marvelling gaze, we cannot find words enough to describe it.

In the Villa Massima in Rome, Karin Sander has nailed vegetables to a wall. So what? Yes, dammit, you might well ask what ideas she's trying to trigger off in our heads this time. Since she's a perfectionist in everything she does, these lettuces and aubergines, the cauliflower, the grapefruits, and the paprika are arranged in a perfect line – a kind of vegetable frieze, indulgently smiling at all previous friezes and decorative borders in the history of art, from antiquity to ecclesiastical art to art nouveau.

In addition, the vegetables seem to be completely intact. Somewhere at the back they must have a nail stuck into them, but you can't see any trace of it. An extremely bright light falls on them, and when you enter the room, for several minutes you are bemused: is this all made of plastic, produced in the same factories that turn out garishly coloured artificial sushi for display? Or is it instead all hyper-real, doused in atomic radiation, creating bilious greens, brilliant reds and lemony yellows that exist nowhere in nature? Will all this vegetable matter burst into rampant growth, right here on the wall, forming a hedge of market vegetables like the one surrounding Sleeping Beauty's castle, and engulfing the room and everyone in it?

When it was nailed up, the tender pomegranate shed a bloody tear that has run down the white wall. And the kohlrabi has stretched out its shoots and leaves, of its own accord, in all directions like a conceited ballerina. Only the best sculptors achieve as much dramatic expression as is radiated by this kohlrabi. The artist has disingenuously labelled these real vegetables "Kitchenpieces". Exhibited like this, they immediately pose like pieces of pop art, looking as if they were sprouting out of the wall and might any minute burst into song. Karin Sander is truly a friendly witch, with minimal effort making everyday objects appear so artificial that our mental processes and perceptive powers have no choice but to spring into action.

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