



Anna Oppermann

The Picture Stands on the Window Sill

15.02.2020 – 18.04.2020

Opening: 14.02.2020, 6 to 9 pm

There will be an introduction by Friedrich Meschede at 7pm

It is our great pleasure to announce the galleries fourth solo exhibition by Anna Oppermann, entitled “The Picture Stands on the Window Sill“.

Following two wonderful exhibitions at Kunsthalle Bielefeld as well as at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts in Boston, which focused on the development within Oppermann’s oeuvre to expand from two dimensional works into three dimensional installations. Both exhibitions premiered early works and ensembles of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The title “The Picture Stands on the Window Sill“ references the poetic ambivalence of Oppermann’s practice and points out the correlation between the single image and the ensembles, between the body and the gaze and the experience of the environment. The quality of Oppermann’s draftmanship is the basis of Oppermann’s reflections on normative aspects and conventional framing which develops into a multi-dimensional perspective of the later large scale ensemble work.

Please find attached the press text, which in excerpts quotes the catalogue text of Kunsthalle Bielefeld, by Friedrich Meschede:

Drawing from Nature

One of Anna Oppermann’s key works is titled “Being an Artist. Drawing from Nature, for Example, Linden Blossom Petals“. This ensemble, created between 1968 and 1985, manifests in its title an aspect that is essential for the understanding of the artist’s oeuvre. For Oppermann, drawing is a confession that often takes a back seat to the “ensemble“, the artistic invention that came to define her style. The proliferation of notes, found

objects, photos and small drawing that Anna Oppermann called “ensembles“ have always held a special fascination for theorists and critics. Her ensembles are impressive and varied representations of an “exit from the image“, as Laszlo Glozer described it in his contribution to the Westkunst 1981 catalogue. Thematically, however, Anna Oppermann’s “exits“ always offer an “entrance to the image“. The initial theme in each of her tableaux can always be identified as a picture-in-picture principle. Expanding on the traditional panel painting, Oppermann seduces the viewer to “exit“ into the space while the subject in the picture leads the gaze inwards to a dimension that may be understood both as a closed-off space inhabited by the artist as observer, and as her actual, invisible, psychological state of mind and, thus, a protocol of her view of the world. The “one“ of the visible world refers to the “other“ of invisible mental states and their meanings. This other is declared in the formal structure of each work’s setting, which elevates from a mere intimate journal entry to a composition representing a personal view of the world.

“Being an Artist“ needs to be read as a manifesto of the overarching intention and an absolute desire to lead a life that does not conform to current social norms and conventions. “Being an Artist“ must be understood as the suggestion of an alternative, opposite plan. The second part of the title, “Drawing from Nature“ indicates an arguably heretofore neglected aspect of the artist Anna Oppermann that I would like to draw attention to. Drawing is Anna Oppermann’s primary art form. Seeing herself as an artist who draws, she is an avid observer of her immediate surroundings. Anna Oppermann is first and foremost a draftsman.



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Fortunately, Oppermann's life partner Herbert Hossmann kept a portfolio of her drawings after her death in 1993. These were on display as a body of work in one room in Bielefeld and will partly be shown at the Gallery.

One drawing in the set stands out as it consists only of lines or contours, the outlined areas blank. The lines are the outline of a hand drawing an oval. It is a drawing representing the act of drawing. The shape drawn by the hand, a shape with round corners, appears in another drawing as fragment of a hand mirror, a leitmotif in many of the drawings. In this mirror image, Anna Oppermann presents us a world that we are only shown in single snippets – a world on which her own gaze is mediated by the mirror. The artist enters a closed-off domestic world that she seems to break free from via the drawing. The view at the outside world appears as image framed by the mirror. This kind of perception introduces varying perspectives as composition principles of these drawings. The viewer has a bird-eye perspective on the drawing, which directs the gaze from the worm's-eye view to the sky outside. Top views and low-angle views interlace, creating spatial constructions in which the constant shifts in perspective guide and seduce the eye of the observer into various positions. The reflected image is reflected once again by yet another mirror. Any hint at an outside world, e.g. a bit of sky, is merely a reflection. Perceived as so many refractions, Anna Oppermann's world is composed of the fragments supplied by this "hall of mirrors". Reflections of reality become image details. Internal motifs, framed as if by accident and furnished with a domestic iconography of potted plants, chives, kitchen-table still lives, become image-worthy, representing an interior

both kaleidoscopic and claustrophile. In the second half of the 1960s, when these drawings were made, Anna Oppermann seems to have opted for a life being an artist in and looking out of a peep box.

Drawing is a very immediate, elemental way of assuring oneself of the world. Anyone can draw. It is arguably our primal form of communication, a precursor of writing. Drawing and writing are everyday activities, forms of expression available to all of us.

From an art historical perspective, the drawing may be defined more narrowly as a draft or sketch. This definition assigns the drawing both a conceptual (design) dimension and an ephemeral character, in that the drawing refers to a more final execution in another medium. The drawing made by the sculptor is the two-dimensional design of a work that will be executed three-dimensionally in another medium. The painter's drawing is a study of details and composition. The drawing made by the drafts(wo)man is a study of the world.

This is the case for Anna Oppermann. Her drawings are finished works, exact and completed executions of ideas, no further iterations required. The drawing is the image. It is therefore incorrect to call Anna Oppermann a painter. This statement applies to her entire early work as well as her panel works, which transcend the traditional paper format, thus declaring themselves to be full-fledged images. The square format of numerous of the fibre panel works shown in Bielefeld is noteworthy – the panels seem to be sized to fit the desk Anna Oppermann used at home in lieu of a traditional easel. Through the act of drawing, Anna Oppermann appropriates the world, or rather, her very own view of the world.



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A new perspective on the drawings, facilitated by looking at this early set, also brings new meaning to the origins of Oppermann's ensembles. She observes the domestic world, portraying herself within it without relinquishing her image. Her whole work becomes a portrait of the artist as an observer or interior worlds. This sheds a new light on Anna Oppermann's other drawings and early works, allowing for a similar interpretation that proves how much we need to re-consider and re-evaluate the artist as a draftsman.

Everything here is drawing, meaning that it arises from a meticulous observance of her surroundings. "Drawing from Nature", then, takes on a double meaning. It may be interpreted as an ironic rejection of the 19th-century academic ideal but might just as well be the artist's declaration of having found her true form of expression in exactly this ideal. All of Anna Oppermann's early works originate in drawing, which allows for the (albeit abbreviated) conclusion that freehand drawing is the artistic method through which artists throughout the centuries have assured themselves of their world, from the first perception of visible reality since Albrecht Dürer through the heyday of German Romanticism, from Adolph Menzel's studies to contemporaries and Anna Oppermann. Drawing is the medium through which artists explore their world and present their findings and insights.

The installation of the ensembles were interpreted by Anna Schäffler.

The exhibition is accompanied by a series of talks at the gallery which will be announced soon.

The catalogue of the Carpenter Center show will be published during the course of the exhibition and can be ordered through the gallery.