

## Meyer Riegger

### Miriam Cahn

körperlich

18.01. – 08.03.2014

To the question of what would be the best title for a book, a work of art or a film, Miriam Cahn answered in the interview book *Drawing Room Confessions #3'*: "What I see is what I feel." Cahn establishes a direct connection between seeing and what the body experiences through feeling. In the same book the artist also speaks of the body as an instrument: one through which movement, vision and breath flow and therefore transforms all that is static into something continuous. In her current exhibition, "körperlich" ("corporeal"), at Meyer Riegger Karlsruhe, Miriam Cahn focuses on this aspect of the physical, which is not only reflected in her choice of subjects, but also especially in the process of the work's development.

For Miriam Cahn (\*1949 in Basel/Switzerland), who uses the media drawing, painting, performance, sound, film, photography, sculpture and text, drawing unleashes a performative potential, it is the most directly linked to the body, and becomes corporeal through it. She draws with her whole body, which is not limited to the hand or the physical corpus, but also the realm of the mind and the soul, to which she grants equal presence as to the hand that draws, by closing her eyes while drawing. Thus, memory as a part of the body becomes the equivalent of an instrument, which Miriam Cahn takes as a basis for her artwork.

The installation "N.Y. (zeitlich geordnete raumarbeit)" is based on this practice of guiding the process of composition through the body's memories. The piece outlines remembered experiences of Miriam Cahn, which took place between 02.02. and 29.03.1992 in New York: her routes, things she heard, feelings, views, thoughts, as well as descriptions of places. The composition and hanging of the expansive work follows an order which corresponds to the temporal succession of the depicted events. The drawings were made with recourse to these notations as well as with closed and open eyes – drawing on the realm of memory, in a state extending from the given to the past. Here, the figuration of the images results from looking inward, which extends into space in the shape of associative dramaturgy and process. However, through the outlining of an experiential space-time, the works are also directly spatially experienced: the sequence of the drawings encloses the viewers, and almost physically integrates them into the narration.

The drawing "L.I.S. strategische orte; mit den kindern und tieren (eisprungarbeit)" (1985) is from the ongoing series "LESEN IN STAUB" (Reading in Dust), which Miriam Cahn creates using her whole body on the ground. The body becomes the subject of the picture (through its traces), but also her vis-à-vis. Thus the physical proximity to the sheet of paper not only describes intimacy, but also a place which captures a personal encounter, which unfolds only between the moment of action and the consummated gesture as a kind of "thinking with hands" (Cahn).

The video installation "LESEN IN STAUB - alltagsarbeit (raumarbeit)", on view in the rear room of the gallery, references this drawing process. It was shot in a sequence of three days (02. - 05.10.1986), with each sequence documenting and chronologically presenting Cahn's ritualised action of each day. On three monitors one sees the hands and arms of the artist cutting up different sized blocks of chalk or pieces of coal, surrounded by the sound of scraping. These iconic objects, which Cahn worked on for about an hour daily, are lined up in a row before the monitors in the exhibition space. Juxtaposed with their own depiction, they form a type of framework encompassing Miriam Cahn's drawings, which are absent, to which the blocks refer through their own materiality.

Christina Irrgang

translation by Zoe Miller

---

<sup>1</sup> *Drawing Room Confessions, Issue #3*: Miriam Cahn, Drawing Room Confessions London/Mousse Publishings Milan, 2011.