

Henrik Olesen at Galleria Franco Noero 05.11.2011-14.01.2012

With most of his earlier exhibitions Henrik Olesen ignored the never ending unresolved dialectics between achieving refinement through formalities and the desire to subvert the regulated procedures of the art space with what is usually called literary narratives by simply ignoring it as a problem and at the same time achieving most advanced results on both sides.

As we look back on already very early exhibitions we see him using for instance the empty space, or defining the space as empty or as non-productive space in contrast to a high loaded field of information. Therefore it is not surprising that one day he would try to turn the formal means somehow against the impulse for the mediation of content, or would one day make the means of his production the object of his survey and of his representations. But looking at the new exhibition through his earlier ones, we can assume that he is not just illuminating the means of this new production alone, but the means of production in itself.

He is observing productively the production itself to the point, which appears to be the "dangerous" point, it is the point where art is in danger to appear empty, an emptiness not concealed by narratives or formalities, where production converges towards nothing, or what some would say it is just nothing. We can assume he is working on and representing this nothing as an essential ingredient of production in itself, or lets say he is dealing with this "nothing" as a difference, as much as he was dealing in his earlier modes with the use of the empty space within a bigger display, which both appear as an almost scientific determination of "empty" and "nothing". He is maybe in a philosophical sense romantically allowing the display of the so much feared immanence of production, which could be a void, could be a so called "nothing". In other words allowing this immanence to be displayed as empty is as procedure comparable to allowing the almost romantic psychoanalytical idea of the unconscious to be represented, here the so called emptiness as the unconscious of art production.

Not at all to be misunderstood as an act of reduction or even worse so as an act towards a so common reductive aesthetics of minimalism, his procedure is therefore a symbolically productive one, which seems to in terms of procedure follow scientific or even mathematic experimentation, reducing elements in order to gain an inherent quality or in order to give an inherent quality a primary representation. One of the newly developed qualities might be the abstract representation of a symbolic act, or symbolic order even for instance. The reduction game as mathematical game is inherent but as well obvious in the tendency to repetition, to numbers and the displacement and suspension of elements following the simple order of enumeration.

The main elements combined still carry a lot of symbolic energy. One might easily associate the displays of nails or other production elements with the order of letters, or even with examples of concrete poetry. But there is as well a visual parallelity to the production of techno sounds. But not only that techno sound was similarly obsessed with the reduction to the pure elements of sound production, to sound enumeration, suspension and repetition, but as well that the surface of the new work of Henrik Olesen displayed here in Torino often reminds of the symbolic culture this techno sounds often produced and reproduced. During the months before the exhibition Henrik Olesen was very interested in the philosophical question of the master slave relationship, particular in the its Hegelian notion, which seems to inherit ritualistic aesthetics of techno culture.

It might be better to explain his new work with a set of apparently simple means of word language, like by describing the sounds that seem to follow in the brain while walking through the different spaces, as if numbers follow you sound like in every step. When one enters one space accompanied by an impression of a claustrophobic moment, but then turning back follows the immediate suspension of it, through the stairs, like one, two, three, more, up, down, different windows suspended, windows displayed, still open, as other windows are replaced, sometimes the artist made holes, one, two, three, more and then, followed by other means of house production, like cables, a piece of art appearing, sometimes a master piece.

The particular house of the gallery became for sure an ideal display, with its unusual number of rooms and floors and stairs etc. but as well it became one of the means of production, like in a romantic novel, it is a kind of a house of numbers and a house of sounds of these numbers, as if one is listening to the sounds of the steps while walking through a symbolic order, listening to its romantic or Hegelian narrative. Strangely, as so often in techno sounds Henrik Olesen created these similar moments of symbolic culture through reduction and focus on the simplest elements, incorporating these as displays of ritualistic relations between people, he made this cultural moment immanent in the production of visual spaces, as with the master slave relations, and he does more the more he reduces to pure numbers to pure means of production.

Josef Strau

List of Works

1st floor

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4th floor

(Blocked window)

1-2,
Screws, Nails, Canvas, each 165 x 165 cm

5th Floor

(Blocked windows)

3-7,
Screws, Nails, Canvas, each 165 x 165 cm

6th Floor

Cable, 2011, Polyurethan cast
Cable, 2011, Polyurethan cast

7th Floor

8,
Screws, Nails, Canvas, 165 x 165 cm