

AMANDA
WILKINSON

Margaret Raspé

Frautomat

Exhibition dates: 28 June 2019 - 9 August 2019

Margaret Raspé has, since the late 1960s, explored different forms of perception and ways of seeing. In the early 1970s she spent two years developing her pioneering 'camera helmet', attaching a Super 8 camera to a metal armature to be worn on the head. While wearing this prosthetic device Raspé became a 'woman-machine' (*Frautomat*), her actions and movements recorded automatically, free of human intervention. Two of the *Frautomat* films provide the starting point for this exhibition. *Blue on White, Edge and Frame*, 1979, charts Raspé's hand as she makes a blue painting, and *The Self-movement of the Frautomat*, 1977, records the artist making automatic drawings.

While Raspé was developing the camera helmet, she also started an 'automatic drawing' diary. She continued this series for over 20 years, exploring the physical act of compulsive drawing through the automatist method, sometimes sitting, lying or kneeling in the same position for hours at a time. Her aim was to relinquish the control of her hand as she made marks on the paper, an act she considered as much physical as psychological. Raspé's automatic drawings thus have more in common with the mechanical recording instruments developed by 19th-Century scientists than with the psychoanalytical approach to automatism later embraced by the Surrealists. As David Lomas wrote in his essay 'Becoming Machine: Surrealist Automatism and Some Involuntary Drawing': 'The graphic method [of such 19th-century recording devices] inaugurated a novel paradigm of visual representation, one geared towards capturing dynamic phenomena in their essence'. Raspé's phenomenological approach to her investigations into the core of an object has its roots in this method.

In the sound installation, *Sound of the Sun*, 1993, Raspé refers to the findings of the astronomer Johannes Kepler who discovered the 'turning frequency' of the sun during his research into the mathematical aspects of the nature of the sun and stars. The sound of this frequency is imperceptible to the human ear, but in this work Raspé translates it into a note on the musical scale and sings overtones layered over an ostinato in C#, making audible that which cannot usually be heard.

In *By Chance*, 1987, Raspé uses old copies of the newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel* as a base material. The newspaper is recycled into grey pulp, which she moulds into random flattened forms, some appearing as letters of the alphabet. Raspé has described these as open elements, 'like sounds of a language that can be put together in any game of association' to produce meaningful form.

Raspé has lived in Berlin-Zehlendorf for most of her life. During the 1970s and '80s she opened up her home as a space for communal debate and various artists associated with Viennese Actionism and Fluxus, who were residing in Berlin at the time, gathered there. Her practice has included drawing, performance and installation. This is the first solo exhibition of her work in the UK.

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