

KAROLINE DAUSIEN

Plinth

24.05. - 14.09.2024

Prologue: Hierarchies

Lagerfeld meets his studio director's parents. "She does such an amazing job," he tells them. "Thank you for everything you do for her," the parents respond. Lagerfeld replies, "I don't do anything for her, we work together!"

A small value chain

The object is old; it has become rare. It is made of precious materials, difficult to source, already a luxury item back when it was first produced. Ideally also unusual, ahead of its time perhaps, in terms of production or technology. Untold hours of skilled labour went into its manufacture. Ideally owned by some "important man", in mint condition. Or with traces of wear and tear, but from a "historical" context. Ideally exquisite, definitive. The item's value is defined not merely by time/labour spent, not merely its utility or exchange value. Or it rejects these categories while still fulfilling them, bears an implicit agreement, taste and distinction solidified within it, long before the currents of time. Value-time-crystals beyond value.

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In this imagined hierarchy of values, the found objects in Karoline Dausien's works would sit at the very bottom. Her assemblages, collages and arrangements are devoid of aura. The ensembles enclosed by mirrors don't demand anything. Unlike those relying on transmission or reflection (literally or otherwise), or those invoking minimal theatricality, these pieces call on fewer effects or spatial categories than concrete repetitions from the almost obsolete, material world of consumption; it is participatory in the loosest sense.

Poor man's silver

The arrangements combine objects from discount beauty outlets, bodegas and thrift stores with predominantly ceramic adaptations and duplications. Along with molds and pieces of fragmented – predominantly female – bodies, as-ifs. Remolded pieces with glazed surfaces oscillating between plastic and metal, much like their replicas borrowed from commercial or décor contexts. Small invocations of participation,

without actual participation. (Gosh)Sylt, Capri(sun), New York(er).

A shimmering silver curtain pulls the small stage forward, the objects back. A peep-box en miniature separates an imaginary "back room" that is almost impenetrable in this digital economy of seemingly infinite goods, from this fully analogue, limited "warehouse". Six miniatures of larger arrangements line the walls (Natura Morta 1-6 series, 2024). A display stand borrowed from poster and comic shops, containing more, in this case flat collages in poster-sized plastic sleeves. These little doublings and references to the consumer sphere in the tapestries heighten the sense of unease of Dausien's enterprise. Finally, in the 'main room' hang textile works reminiscent of stitched gift wrap (Present series, 2024), yet nothing is wrapped, and the sequence is entirely centered on the symbolic act of gift-giving. Ribbon by ribbon, the order follows the material remnants of a dying street economy. The circuit begins and ends at precisely this point, an exterior in the interior, two 1:1 scale mock-ups of shopfronts (Paradies I, Paradies II, 2024), in which the central component, the separator of spheres that is the precondition for desire – the large glass – has been removed. Inside and outside collide, indistinguishable.

Art Nouveau

Just as industrialisation first devalues and renders entire branches of craftsmanship obsolete to generate permanent sales under the dictum of obsolete "modernity", it equally downgrades the labour required. Only to then integrate the mass-produced goods into its own value creation and cynically present them back as "folk art" to the people previously tricked into discounting these goods as anything special. What was originally intended to herald a renaissance of craftsmanship in the sphere of the accursed mass-produced goods, is surprisingly well suited for industrial reproduction with all its flourishes, volutes and decorations.

Leap through time and space. Wirtschaftswunder (economic miracle), oil crisis, perestroika. Quelle, Otto and Neckermann plunder entire national economies in exchange for urgently

needed foreign currency, which in turn pay for cheap products to keep the apparatus going. The price is a mortgage on social development and participation, on all sides. The radius shifts from the GDR to Eastern Europe, from Eastern Europe to Asia. Impoverished consumers who can only afford increasingly cheaper products but must continually consume to maintain their status, are forced to settle for a cheap product that allows consumer participation, but without distinction, and devoid of any resale value whatsoever. Absolute devaluation reigns above and beyond diminishing utility value.

This is the starting point for the exhibition's most delicate operation. The assemblages form an uncanny alliance. Also, because, counter to the norm in the realm of representation and differentiation, one's own positioning would seem to be either cynical, patronising or helpless in the face of the obsolescence of these forms; were it not for a moment of serious, credible solidarity aimed at re-participation. From a material necessity standpoint does it make more sense to wear clothing that is clean but cheap, or high-quality, albeit damaged and worn? Answering this question may already say a lot about Dausien's exhibition, or then again, nothing. Because whether this plays any role at all, and the extent to which we take it as a lever of distinction, reveals far more.

Epilogue

Nine thirty in the morning in Germany. Franz-Josef Strauss is visiting the GDR. Hors d'oeuvres are served. "I don't eat lumpfish shit (Seehasenscheiße)," he says ...

Robert Müller

KUNSTRAUM SCHWAZ

Palais Enzenberg

Franz-Josef-Str. 27 | A-6130 Schwaz

Wed – Fri 1 – 6 pm, Sat 10 am – 3 pm

closed on Sundays and public holidays

1.1
Natura Morta (Insel Austria), 2024
mirrors, chipboard, found objects, glazed ceramics

1.2
Natura Morta (Handarbete), 2024
mirrors, chipboard, found objects, glazed ceramics

1.3
Natura Morta (Truck), 2024
mirrors, chipboard, found objects, glazed ceramics

1.4
Natura Morta (Bach), 2024
mirrors, chipboard, found objects, glazed ceramics

1.5
Natura Morta (Egg), 2024
mirrors, chipboard, found objects, glazed ceramics

2.1
Present I, 2024
various textiles, filling material, stretcher, yarn

2.2
Present II, 2024
various textiles, filling material, stretcher, yarn

3
Present (Konvolut), 2024
various textiles, filling material, yarn

4
Present (Versprechen), 2024
various textiles, yarn

5
Paradies I, 2024
mirror, textile, found objects, glazed ceramics, wire

6
Paradies II, 2024
pressed chipboard, wall paint, mirrors, textiles, found objects, glazed ceramics, wire

7
Lips, 2023
textile, leather, stretcher, filling material, yarn, glazed ceramics, wire

OFFICE

Edition „Plinth“, 2024
poster + price tag

Collages, 2011 - 2024
encased in plexiglass

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