

SPIKE 73 ART MAGAZINE

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SPIKE VULNER- ABILITY

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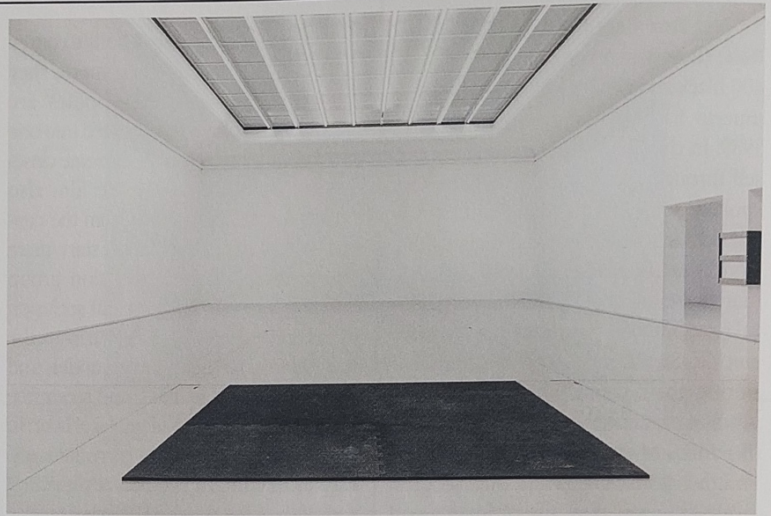


Objections

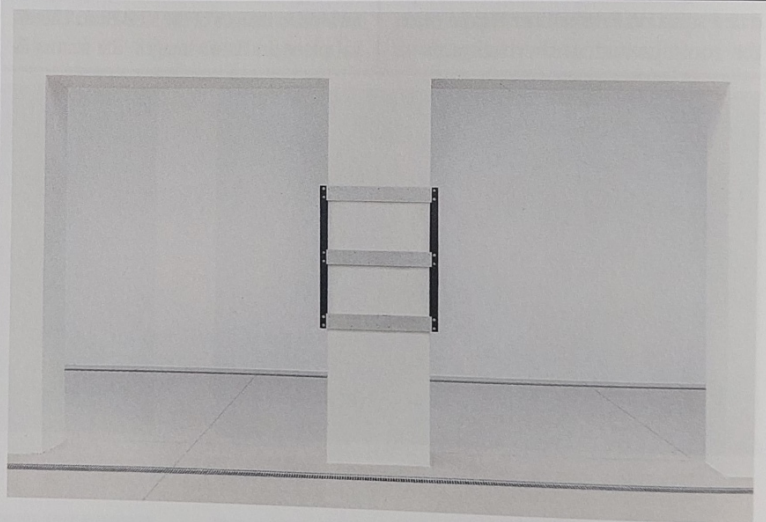
ANITA LEISZ
"WÜRDIGUNGSPREIS DES LANDES STEIERMARK FÜR BILDENDE KUNST 2020"
HALLE FÜR KUNST STEIERMARK
24 JUN – 4 SEP 2022

There is an obvious hierarchy between the two rooms forming the main space of Halle für Kunst Steiermark. To the right of the first larger room is a smaller side room. Anita Leisz (*1973) lessens this disparity by closing the apsis in the back of the first space, which is not mentioned in the press release nor, thankfully, on the list of artworks. This detail of the installation and its (non-)mediation come with a vibe of necessity. Its silence sets it apart from positions such as Michael Asher's, which has a slightly more aimed, but also educational relation to the exhibition space as an institution. In Leisz's case the apsis just had to go, not only following a modernist, but rather a pre-modernist industrial rationale. Leisz's works reiterate industrialism as the origin of the white cube. The bright, almost featureless space broods with sparsity. In addition to the artworks, utilities such as electricity line covers, emergency exit signs, and even the materials of the floor seem accentuated. It is significant that Leisz's works team up with the basic small utilities of the exhibition space, rather than disregarding or outshining them. The artworks stem from the same tangible reality as the room itself, forming a kind of melancholic, sculptural habitat.

These works can be classed under two different categories. The imperial first room, with few works installed only in the front half, highlight the raw materials of the realm of classical production industries and construction: gypsum, aluminum, plywood,



View of "Würdigungspreis des Landes Steiermark für bildende Kunst 2020"



Untitled, 2022
 Iron, enamel, aluminum, wood, screws
 100 x 84 x 57 cm

various screws, a rubber floor mat. Most of them carry slight traces of use or of their production process. Some of these traces have a painterly quality. This tends to come easily with any kind of stains and scratches on monochrome surfaces in a white cube, but Leisz manages to keep these painterly moments dimmed and somewhat poetic.

Secondly, Leisz inverts both the spatial and material hierarchy of the first room by installing a group of three wall pieces with rather dominant surfaces – a classic modernist monochromatic look in the small side room. Their semigloss black enamel coating stresses the aesthetic of a finished commodity contrary to the more preliminary and restrained logic of the

Courtesy: Galerie Meyer Kainer, Vienna

Courtesy: Norma Mangione Gallery, Turin

Photos: kunst-dokumentation.com



Untitled, 2022
Enamel, screws, various materials
375 x 45 x 362 cm

large room. One of these works sheathes the single column in the gap between the two rooms. It is a hybrid between these already twisted worlds, Janus-faced, each following the structural logic of the respective rooms.

To further elaborate on the details of the show might exhaust the review format, but there is one feature

of Leisz's sculptures that seems crucial: Most of her work on view here articulate a trait of protection, a cover or a veneer. In German, you would call that a "Schoner." A *Schoner* protects walls, corners, shin bones, for example. It is necessary for places, surfaces, and limbs often frequented, regularly used and/or exposed. Objects like the rubber floor

mat (*Matte*, 2022) or the two small metal ledgers (*Untitled*, 2022) shielding the corners in the entrance to the first space, are common safeguard items in an industrial environment like factories and storage units.

Even the slightly painterly wall works seem more a protective than decorative measure. If one bends down to look at the bottom of one of the three monochrome pieces with finished black surfaces installed in the side room, they have a wooden plywood core. This is either an unnecessary supporting structure or a soft hidden core – shielded (*geschont*).

As Leisz's work consists solely of black and white and the shades in between, the green of the emergency exit sign appears to be the only obvious color in the room. The aesthetics of black and white range somewhere in between kitsch and earnestness – it's a very basic modernist theme since such contrasts yield form as well as appeal in their reduction.

Experiencing Leisz's show will most likely be done in combination with four video works by Yalda Afsah (*1983) in the downstairs space of the Halle, featuring animals in cultivated interaction with humans. The two shows together create a striking reciprocal situation within the institution.

Afsah's bestiary and the sensual interactions between animals and humans seems the *prima facie* opposite to Leisz's materials. However, the attentive way of Afsah's camera as she follows these animals conditioned by their respective communities (e.g. the competitive Roller pigeon breeders in Compton) is actually very similar to Leisz's treatment of the materials as part of their respective spatial contexts. There is a similar kind of aloof affection and rhythmicity that is very much at ease with itself; it does not seek the audience, but also does not object to it.

Benjamin Hirte