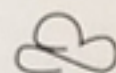


ANDREA LOEFKE

A PARADOXICAL WORLD IN MINIATURE

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Andrea Loeffke's new installation is like a fairytale in the form of a doll's house, where Alice in Wonderland meets M.C. Escher. The work commissioned by Thomas Rusche for the SOR art collection was developed in three steps — from the preparation of numerous handcrafted objects in her New York studio, to a grand collection of various materials that were shipped to the exhibition location, and then the final installation of the piece in Berlin-Charlottenburg over the course of two visits. The art collector and the artist met in New York through Matthias Weischer, one of her classmates from university days in Leipzig. During a subsequent visit to Loeffke's Brooklyn studio, the idea for a site-specific work in Berlin was born, which would allow for a wide artistic freedom despite the narrow dimensions of the exhibition space. Once she visited the location, Loeffke chose to reference some of the works already present in the space. For example, the papyrus drawings by Cornelia Schleime, which border between the erotic and the obscene, were paraphrased by Loeffke with red vegetative forms mounted on the wall opposite them.

Loeffke titled her work "Zuhause gehe ich die Treppe rauf statt runter" (*At home I go up the stairs, not down*). Here we can observe a playful use of materials and forms with the wall, ceiling and floor of the small corridor in the stately apartment. She claimed the space by focusing her complex work primarily on the ceiling, allowing it to gradually merge into the space that she partially colored and wallpapered, rendering them inseparable. Small cloth figures, faceless and androgynous, dangle upside-down from the ceiling, as if diving into the room below. We further discover miniature white shelves, consoles, fences and ladders, which seem to take over the walls at various heights; we as real-size viewers would have to mount a full-sized ladder in order to experience all aspects of the work, to climb into the work, visually. A number of ladders deftly lead our gaze into emptiness, reminiscent of M.C. Escher's impossible perspectives. We encounter an inverted spatial hierarchy that concentrates on the room's ceiling, while the visual elements dissipate downward along the walls. At the same time, the entire work itself has been turned on its head. Through the work's physical inaccessibility, the artist makes the reception of her work more challenging — a good position to perceive it might be to lie on the floor, looking up at it from below. As with any complex installation, each point of view radically changes the work; a traditional eye-level perspective suffices but for an initial cursory and inadequate impression.

A closer examination reveals the complexity of the unusual intervention. What initially might seem to be a whimsically lighthearted installation becomes a profound and provocative work with a subtle touch of evil à la Henry Darger. Suddenly, we associate the color red with blood and

amorphous scraps of fabric with body fragments. Even the small puppet creatures are no longer merely floating, but are plunging into a bottomless void; some seem to have already burst on the ground. Like Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the bourgeois paradise morphs into a traumatized, claustrophobic shadow world. It all seems a bit too colorful, like the final scene from David Lynch's film *Blue Velvet*. Such "slip effects" between harmony and horror are often found in the work of German artists who are still strongly influenced by German Romanticism, where beyond a basic tone of idyllic melancholy lurk abysmal depths: ghosts, insanity, death. In her work, Andrea Loeffke succeeds in harmoniously combining such glaring dualisms as the light and the dark sides, dreams and nightmares. The inclusion of small-format, framed drawings by the artist (mounted at various heights along the wall) both complement and visually comment on the installation.

An enigmatic game played on different levels of meaning and form captivates us, a play with light and shadow. A host of small mirrors additionally fractures the work or — depending on how you look at it — fractionally multiplies it. Through our reflections in these, we appear as an occasional minute detail. The work creates spaces that are illusory, contradictory. In Loeffke's earlier works we also encounter nested focal points or room-in-room constructions alongside hulking architectural sculptures and site-specific installations. Now, for the first time, she has relinquished the "white cube" of the gallery system in order to focus on continual contextualization. According to the artist, the installation in Berlin, is about the notion of home and relationships that have lost their equilibrium. Decorative materials, such as checkered cloth, curtain rods or garden fences, were intentionally selected as "typical German" elements. Through their paradoxical accumulation, curious combination and dimensional shifts, however, the traditional notion of bourgeois living is rearticulated.

Good art, as we know, is always a mix of visual seduction and intellectual stimulation. Likewise, Andrea Loeffke sends us on a thrilling journey of discovery. With her installation, she turns categories inside out and on their head and offers us a parallel universe. Everything is based on illusion and pure creative fantasy, and yet maintains a link to the familiar and real. The result is an own artistic cosmos in miniature, a manifold narration, which we need only to read and complete with our own childlike imaginations. For it is then that we are closest to the artistic process of intuitive association — and our inner projector starts up, all by itself...

Current Show "Homecoming" at Snack Mellon, Brooklyn, New York, from 23 November 2013 - 5 January 2014

2009, media installation, 4 x 24 x 12 feet, commission by SOR Rusche Collection - Berlin, photograph courtesy triestefotografia

