

## Rediscovery of DAS SCHWERE Silvia Martín Gutiérrez

The Austrian artist Suse Stoisser, born in Leibnitz in Southern Styria in 1964, shows a high level of creativity in her artistic oeuvre and is focused in recovering inspiration by turning energy and illusion into a feasible utopia. She shows us that it is possible to search for what Rilke called "*das Schwere*", referring to the difficult and the heavy, that what remains and what resists. In her investigations of materials, she switches from inclusion to collages of individual elements, the application of suggestive colors to metallic monochromacy, at the same time creating an ethereal character out of polycarbonate substance. Despite the strong physical presence of Stoisser's artwork, we are struck by the elusive character captured in these objects. The figure appears as a reduction of human forms, in the shape of silhouettes, connoting eroticism and the metamorphic potency of nature. In combination with the quintessence of creative vitality Stoisser's London Exhibition *Now You See It*. at Art Bermondsey Project Space provides a survey of the creative evolution of the artist.

Suse Stoisser considers her search as a progressive process, in which the individual objects can be characterized as adaptable, alive, oscillating, organic, opaque and crystalline. Since she started at the *Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Wien* (Academy of Fine Arts of Vienna) her artistic development passed through different stages. Although individual pieces might be influenced by their respective geographical origin, the artist's evolution does not stay within an unidirectional way. While it is true that the body of work of the eighties has a very strong affiliation with nature, and that her formal occupation at that time pivoted around the organic shape, we recognize Stoisser's focus on the idea of what remains and its continuity through all of her career. Similar to contemporary society, Stoisser's oeuvre operates on different layers of interpretation. According to Postmodernism Fukuyama declared the End of the History. This influences the artist's urge for points of reference. Rilke characterizes space created by the tension between two points, and encourages us to adhere to the difficult, which lies in the exclusive matter itself and to defend it against any resistance.

The artist's oeuvre features classical as well as contemporary references. In Vermeer's paintings lies a dichotomy between what is and what is not visible; in Antonioni's movie *Blow-up* the dichotomy is between what is seen and what is not seen; in Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour* what is said and what is not said. These contrasts are continually present in Stoisser's oeuvre. Rainer Maria Rilke is an important referent to Joseph Beuys. The German artist had discovered Rodin's engravings which were illustrating a text of Rilke in 1922. Beuys' interest was awakened by the French sculptor's innovation to represent the body in a fragmentary way. Another fundamental dimension shared by both,

which represents a revolutionary extension in the comprehension of sculpture, is the innovative idea of expressing art in motion and to incorporate the notion of time. Stoisser takes up the findings of Beuys to show us a work divided into layers, where contrasts coexist, where one thing reinforces the other and finally, where the process is alive. Open figures, cut figures, obverses and reverses, sculptural subject and sculptural object. Suse Stoisser presents the dialectic nature of a piece via the contradictory complexity of the material itself, and encourages us to think about the importance of the work in progress and process.

In this exhibition, Stoisser has selected a body of work representative of her concepts of signifier and significance. The slate rocks of *Pile of letters* (2014) as well as those of *fun, found* (2011) force us to look at reality from another point of view. The delusive effect of small steel plates in form of letters worked into the shale produce favorable spatial plasticity, and the artist exposes the two antipodes between the *objet trouvé* and the signifier. To distinguish between the different pieces, Stoisser chooses *Back to Square One* (2008) the earliest piece in the exhibition, a textual magma, that similar to *Dadá* artworks, operates under the chaos of the semiotic. *God doesn't play dice* said Einstein, an affirmation that has been refuted in 2015. The question of hazard and if the universe is controlled or ruled by random events is represented in *3 Dice* (2010), made out of Corten. It shifts between the idea of predetermination and change, ontology and ethics, between what is and what ought to be.

Three pieces named *Devil's first aid* (2014), one cut out of Corten steel and the other ones cut out of aluminum and varnished in a pink tone, reveal the tension which is created between the formal qualities and the signifiers of the piece. In these pieces the objects themselves are the message. In dialogue with this group we discover *Handle with care* (2014) and *You cannot take it with you* (2014). In both works the shale stone is presented in combination with distant materials, planes of methacrylate plastic and of stainless steel. By making a point of the commercial aspect of the art object of today, the complexity between form and object itself is reinforced by the manipulation of the respective materials and the observations of their distinctive qualities.

With *Cupids, 1,2,3* (2014) Love, Agape and Eros enter the scene, again the difficult, again Rilke, to love is the most delicate and deepest thing. The shapes of the legs of the cherubs of Albrecht Dürer, rise skyward from a pedestal akin to the social, moral and political difficulties of our time. Equally, *Promise guaranteed* (2014) and *HE is not there* (2014) pay tribute to classical painting, a loan from Zurbarán's draperies and Grünewald's waistcloth. Here we see the contrasts between classical and contemporary references, and we start questioning about the real thing and the unreal, the contemporary and the ancient. The

spectator could recompose the different parts of something previously whole like in a surrealist *cadavre exquis*.

Finally Stoisser shifts towards the dominance of transparent material. *Try walking in these shoes* (2016) invites us, like in the song of Depeche Mode, to intervene in the artwork, to be an active spectator in the reflections of light produced by this piece. Steps seem to move towards you or away, and again the artist is enmeshed in search of a process. In The tradition of Schelling, Stoisser takes us to the concept of failure, understood as a principle of looking inward and absorption, and thus providing the essence of our human condition. *A&E, framed* (2008-2015), which is composed by various plastic layers, expresses an enigmatic character similar to Duchamp's *Big Glass*. Replicated images of Dürer and Newton form the narrative, formal and metatextual content, which is about the controversy between Science and Religion. Transparent pipes connect the different surfaces to each other. In *mms 1, 2* the artist continues her innovative use of materials as described in the a. m. two works. Within a reduced format of layers, these small pieces show us landscapes related to vague human figures.

Working in different scales and materials the artist manages to construct an incisive multifaceted iconographic discourse.

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