

WAVE OFF

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Let's assume that the world originated from a dialectic principle. That it is trapped within it and cannot find the gateway to a synthesis. And even if this were the case, that there were a fourth possibility, that a chink could open up between thesis, antithesis and synthesis? A fourth dream level, an exercise in the fourth dimension? A gymnast is caught in midair – no problem! We can just forget the dimension of time. Or increase the air drag for the free fall until the parachutist literally stands in the air. No landing in the drop zone after the exit. Everything is left dangling in the air.

Annegret Bleisteiner's works induce pauses, freeze time-frames, layer slices of time one after the other. It is the time before the "wave off". Prior to this moment, an avalanche of notions, words, opposites, motifs, concrete images thrust downwards at a tearing pace. Only when the balance between the speed of falling and air drag is achieved, does tranquility prevail. The situation stabilizes for a brief moment, until the "wave off" that breaks the free fall and initiates a safe, controlled landing.

DIE "VERTIKALE TRAUMBENE"

THE VERTICAL DREAM LEVEL (pp. 34–37)

The ventilator in the airbed is breathing slowly, spurs on the dreams of those sleeping. It greets the visitor right at the entrance with its humming tone, takes him or her along on a journey into another dimension. The rear wall of the room is spanned by a blue airbed with built-in ventilators to keep its radiantly tactile, textile appearance inflated. The steady, monotonous tone lulls the viewer to sleep, rhythmizes real-time, makes it dissolve into a peaceful state of "time-all-over". On entering the Bunker, the visitor journeys into a special zone, into a special room far away from daily life, into a room shaped by tranquility and a different microclimate, that conveys the cool charm of a refrigerator. Other rules prevail here. The viewer can come to rest, concentrate fully on himself, cast off his linear timeline and sway into the rhythmic time of sleep with eyes open. In stark contrast to the coldness and hostility of the Bunker, the bright color of the airbed conveys a feeling of the light and hazy days of summer, a promise of reveling and splashing in a nearby lake, exhilaration and irony urged on by the sound of the ventilator that blows the mattress over the lake like the wind. It is always plumped up and on standby, more rearing to go than any other airbed, as the outward appearance is deceptive – this is not a one-off system that is inflated only to lose air over the day, but the product of deceptively genuine sky advertising that operates using a system that is not airtight. Air constantly escapes along the seams of the mattress and is pumped up again by the ventilator to keep the mattress plump and firm. The mattress breathes, quietly, evenly, regularly, exactly, shows the person lost in sleep the way, dreamlessly, but mechanically perfectly. And yet this is sleep on call as the airbed is not positioned on the floor but standing against the wall waiting

for the user. Whom it leads upwards over its vertical grooves, to the outside, up and away from the hermetic confinement of the room. As if it could take on the indoctrinated stability and indestructibility of the room with its lightness and airiness. But that remains a futile effort, an attempt at "what would happen if", a fantasy taking on bodily form, a vertical dream level. For only in one's head, and only if the logical side is switched off, can the hermetic room of the Bunker be left behind, can the airbed be activated. If the viewer lets dreams in, he may drift over the lake or experience the relaxing calm of sleep. Another viewer may wish to board a flying carpet and hurl himself into new adventures far away from reality. The airbed propped up against the wall nurtures the promise of a distant Caribbean island, of sunshine, water and beach, of leaving the wear and tear of everyday life behind, of a holiday mood and relaxation. It marks a promise of fulfillment of the desire for peace and quiet, free of stress – a genuine advertising claim right out of the TUI catalogue.

Let's return to art. Annegret Bleisteiner is a painter. Portrayed as a picture, the airbed might be a large, blue monochrome area, a three-dimensionally breathing painting with blocks of color with vertical profiles dividing up the surface area. Blue dominates the room, radiates over the walls, with its calming coolness it helps us to gather our thoughts and channel our gaze, gently beckons us to the calmness of the transitional zone. Sky-blue cleanses the confused thoughts of the day. And yet – that is not a picture, more a "ready-made", but a false "ready-made". Unlike Duchamp, who found his "ready-mades" in a state ready for use and just had to select them, this airbed has not been seconded from the summer department of a sports store or the shelves of a supermarket. No, it was made especially for this room, not by the artist herself but by a company that does sky advertising. So that makes it a customized "ready-made" then – Duchamp would have been delighted; a sculpture disguised as a "ready-made". And yet not a sculpture either, but an empty advertising shell that inflates itself to become something that it isn't. That pretends to be plump and firm, yet volatilizes instantly when the plug is pulled. There is virtually no other object that seems more apt at symbolizing the void beneath the surface of an advertising slogan. If you strip off the outer skin this will put an end to every illusion, sure disenchantment for any dream. In the exhibition in the Bunker, this advertising object assumes an air of the grotesque for it is not only "sky advertising" that depends on outdoors, but also its empty promises vanish in thin air. Let's not forget that this airbed is not a "ready-made", it has never been deployed for advertising purposes, never intended for any real usage. If it were a "ready-made" it would lose its function within the given context, and would thus become senseless, have absolutely no sense at all, but be open to new meanings. Through art, this object taken from the world of practical adver-

tising media, acquires a symbolic meaning. It now focuses on the longing of the viewer with which advertising strategy operates beyond the overt promises of advertising: the promise of the freedom of floating over the clouds unaffected by the claws of time and space. But this symbiosis is even deeper: not only has a shape been lifted from advertising but art has usurped its connotations too. At this point it would seem appropriate to broach the issue as to whether Annegret Bleisteiner's oeuvre has didactic intentions, for example of laying advertising strategies bare. If you let the air out of advertising, the work of art will also disappear. It clings to it like a parasite. A relationship has been reversed: it is no longer advertising that is looting the artistic and theoretical strategies of art, but the work of art itself processes it, uses it as material, accepts it as a given fact, as a rigid pawn. Every sign represents a particular yearning. Placed side by side, they piece together to form a patchwork quilt of emotions and perceptions, arranged as a panorama of dreaming.

But that is only one aspect of the "Vertical Dream Level". When the visitor enters the room, the three-dimensional quality of the sound of the ventilator is enhanced, it is amplified by a similar humming of the two flat-screen monitors hanging on the walls facing the mattress that communicate with each other across the corner. The same video runs on both monitors but with a time delay in a loop of 10 minutes. It begins and ends with a 360° pivot over a farming type of landscape that could be anywhere in the world: it shows the place where everything starts, our round earth. When it has gone full circle, the panorama slowly sinks and condenses into a small strip at the foot of the picture, continues to rotate there throughout the video and when it reaches the end, the panorama increases in size once again and fills the entire screen. The sinking of the panorama marks the start of a complex pattern of individual, overlapping layers of images. It starts with the head of a girl sleeping that becomes more interspersed by shots of a trip through a tunnel. While the panorama continues to rotate, the journey through the tunnel leads into the depth of the picture. It becomes the entrance to the exit, pauses in the transitional zone of the journey; the old place has been left behind, the new one not yet reached.

The direction of movement is retained throughout the video; it is transferred by means of the subsequent pictures and combined with constantly new layers and movements of images from right to left, from top to bottom, etc.: clouds pass in the sky, trees are reflected in the lake, airplanes take off, aerial shots depict flights over mountains and residential areas, etc. Simultaneously, the panorama rotates like an engine in the foot strip, the ventilator of the whole, complex layering. Now they are all assembled, the classical composition lines of pictures from the western world: the tunnel as the perspective that leads into the centre of the picture from the edges, into its own pictorial reality; clouds that underline the surface

span of the picture – its all-over quality, and airplanes that report from the reading direction of the story, from left to right. A complex image composition is thus created, and one which undergoes a constant process of regeneration. In contrast to a classical picture, every compositional form generates its own unique image layer, no longer producing the same rendering as before. The video image disintegrates into synchronous layers, the converse movements of which level out, thus creating a kind of patchwork of motion.

Set against this flickering restlessness: the static position of the girls sleeping. They are the true subject of the picture. They hardly move; with their relaxed calm they envelop the contradicting movements and unify the elements of the picture. It is not a matter of creating a portrait of the individual personality of those sleeping, but a portrait of sleeping itself as an activity. But an activity which – in contrast to activity in a waking state – is not goal-oriented and for a specific purpose, but an uncontrollable end in itself; an activity that reports on the inner personality of the person sleeping. Sleeping is the height of grotesqueness: hardly has the body reached a state of rest and relaxation when thoughts start to buzz in all directions, exploit all possibilities, even ones beyond the realms of reality and logic, thus creating complex worlds incorporating what has been experienced, imagined, thought and felt. The steep inclination of the airbed allows the dreamer to leave real space, to fling open the windows to a dream world of fantasy, to a world of limitless, simultaneous occurrences which is not dominated by cool thought but by perceived thought.

THE GRAY PICTURES (pp. 16–33)

The "Vertical Dream Level" is the starting point for the somnambulist multi-dimensionality of the pattern that characterizes Annegret Bleisteiner's pictures. Since 2002, the artist has been working on a well-differentiated series of "gray pictures" that can be continuously reorganized into their own thematic groups: water, dealing with history and the past, time and space subjects, etc. The central thread running through all pictures in the "Gray Series" is the system of layering images levels. In contrast to the images in the videos, these are however not diaphanous but overlay one another, merge on the picture area to form a coherent composition that, at the same time, conveys the impression of several pictures being layered on top of one another.

These layers of pictures may be divided into four larger areas that are in turn also subdivided. The rearmost level of all pictures comprises an abstract, almost classical manner of painting, namely utilizing blocks of color. A wide brush is used to mix Prussian Blue with Terra de Siena, or Chromium Oxide with Rose Madder to create a colorful, lively gray tone. This may be made more vivid by adding further colors. In some cases, traces of mixing the paints on the canvas remain clearly visible there, for example in the picture

“Dive” (p. 16) and dominate the coloring of the picture. The area of color on canvas that is “in motion” is then applied using a paint roller to create a dabbing effect, a coarse “all-over” structure which, depending on the subsequent steps or inclusion of a further color, etc. as for example in the picture entitled “Dream” (p. 20), is a strong element that has the optical effect of bringing the rearmost layer of the picture to the foreground. This rearmost layer of the “Gray Pictures” may be regarded as a coherent, self-contained picture that sets the color to determine the mood of the painting. One almost has the feeling that the artist does not “trust” the workability of this “abstract” painting alone, as it serves as the background for further figurative levels in the next step. The result is an exciting dialogue between a style of painting that dates back to the 1960s and figurative painting that is reminiscent of more contemporary work, such as the Leipzig School.

These figurative levels are not layered successively but are often created simultaneously and thus penetrate several layers. But they can still be clearly separated and identified. The level that is most closely related to the areas of color is that of the geometric forms. Circles, and ellipses in particular, are an integral part of virtually all “Gray Pictures”; they repeatedly appear in many variations of lying, standing, round, with parallel lines as in “Sleep” (p. 21), empty and filled in individually. The ellipse itself marks the artist’s preference for flexible forms that may assume a flowing character. In contrast to circles, squares, rectangles and triangles, they contain both a circular and an angular form; they are modules of a painting that can undergo transformation and can shape other forms in any new constellation in the painting. The ellipses are a kind of personal signature of the artist’s with which she “stamps” her paintings, thus ensuring the recognizability factor of the “Gray World”.

The painting of the figures occupies yet another level. Depending on the painting in question, it is divided up into various spatial zones that are not organized in a definite manner in terms of perspective, but always communicate in terms of composition. It often spans the depth of the painting to the outermost edge, as for example in “Dream” (p. 20) or “Waft” (p. 22) in which a head in a supine position leads directly into the picture. It is this area, in the “Gray Series”, where the greatest innovation and development can be found; in the last few years, figures have increasingly been combined with machine parts, cables, tubes, etc. This figurative level portrays the narrative aspect of the paintings. However, an outlining technique in translucent black or a single-color has been used for all figures that gives them the appearance of comic figures rather than tangible narrative figures.

On yet another level, the story takes on the concrete form of words. Industrially produced templates are used to apply lettering to the painting. The depiction now uses words, it finds an unequivocal means of expression – at least it promises the clearly defined

solidity of industrial lettering that is used for coding purposes. But this solidity is deceptive. Take the “Dive” painting for example (p. 16), the lettering of “DIVE”, “MATURE”, “WAKE UP”, “CORE”, “DARE”, “TIME”, “NOTHING”, “TO BE” hardly serves to explain the contents of the pictures. The differentiated color and emphatic character of the lettering automatically indicates that it constitutes a level of its own that does not explain what is being depicted nor have any descriptive relation to it. Lifted out of their coding context, the words may have their own interrelations. The focus is no longer on the semantic aspect of the words but more on the “sound” of the words, the host of connotations and associations beyond pure content, the sea of impressions with no really clearly definable limits that surrounds words which, when combined, create their own level of whispering like a “lexicon” of lost words on the verge of drifting into sleep, initiating the dreams of the persons sleeping.

These image levels create an irrational space – irrational both in terms of image and thought. The image space of the “Gray Pictures” has no chance from the very start. By means of the different levels, it is explicitly thematized but at the same time denied. The color-block element that functions as a synonym for two-dimensionality like no other, closes off the space to the rear but allows it to flow to the sides and spread like oval soap bubbles. It does not create any perspective for the figures. And they, in turn, do not create any space themselves. They do not form any uniform perspective together or any constant scale. They have been drawn with rough outlines to produce a certain flatness like in poster painting; there is merely a reference to plasticity but no implementation; light and shade have been reduced to purely “abstract” linear renderings which means that even the larger figures do not have any spatial weight.

But that is not everything that can be said about the figures. They recall various forms of pictorial log-maps of gestalt, which they “express” on different levels. In terms of the manner in which they have been painted and their nature, drawn from contemporary youth culture, they remind us of simple posters or comics: this is also borne out by the actual quotations from comics and the caption-like ellipses and the use of slogan-type words. But they also speak another quite different pictorial language. They are much too differentiated and single-minded for a comic; they develop their own “poetry” too much for that and contribute too little to a recognizable storyline. Their origin cannot be denied for they really come from classical drawing that developed out of observation and imitating nature. The starting point for the figures is sketches of photographs or real persons. This gives the figures in the paintings their documentary character – stopping the march of time – that runs contrary to the timelessness of comic figures.

A unique vocabulary has been developed for the figures within this painting series. Some figures keep reappearing, gym-

nasts, a person lying, a person reading; some figures or groups of figures roam through individual pictures, for example the same group of young people appears and moves from “Sea” (p. 30) to “Sail” (p. 33) on to “Dive” (p. 16), but they are always depicted from different angles, sometimes alone but also in smaller constellations of figures. In this series a recognizable stock of people establishes itself, ranging from people from the artist’s own intimate circles, from her private life, to people exhibiting varying degrees of the unknown. The figures do not really reveal their particular relationship towards the artist but it gradually becomes clear throughout the pictures due to a certain significance that is implied or the frequency of repetition of a single figure. At the same time, their individuality is however reduced, not only by means of the outlining manner of painting, but also as they are doubled, multiplied or repeated within one picture, giving the “portraits” an abstract quality of having been stamped like a wallpaper pattern, e.g. in “Sleep” (p. 21) or “Air” (p. 25). Somewhere between single sketches and templates, the rendering of the figures is quite intentionally kept hanging in the balance. The cross-fading of these two means of portrayal results in mixing elements from existing pictures with the artist’s own, commonplace scenarios with their pictorial symbols and uniquely personal viewpoints; the result is a whole that comprises bold and intimate figurativeness.

The body as an abstract pictorial symbol – does that work? As in the case of the lettering, no explicit interrelations between form, which is basically always abstract, and content, which is not necessarily inherently linked to the former, can be determined. What remains is playing with possible interfaces which need to be felt and perceived rather than approached cognitively. The simultaneity in the method of rendering corresponds to a degree of irrationality in the spatial points of reference. None of the figures focuses on the viewer; without exception, they are wrapped up with themselves, looking straight ahead or looking into their own being. Lying, sitting, bending and standing – they are frozen in a resting position on the verge of the transitional phase from waking to sleep, from daydreaming to drifting off into the night. Against the background of the color-block element, the figures themselves become sketches; they are transparent like fading fragments of memories from the transitional zone of a person sleeping.

THE OTHER COLORFUL SIDE: “250 GEFÜHLE AUF STOFF” 250 FEELINGS ON FABRIC (pp. 48–51)

Here they are – spread out: 250 feelings and emotions on fabric, occupying three tables spanning 10 m × 1.25 m. One feeling measuring 20 cm × 25 cm on a stretcher frame. Every feeling has a fabric of its own – this is what dreams are made of. The materials range from primitive cleaning cloths to elegant fabric straight from the fashion business. Objects found around the house, mainly plastic, are attached to this “tactile film”. They include simple throw-away

items such as bottle tops, tips of New Year’s rockets, ice-cream spoons, molds for sandcastles, plastic dishes and lids, non-returnable packaging, cheap gaudy children’s toys such as rattles, tiny plastic figures, etc. and larger plastic objects, e.g. from the kitchen such as a citrus press, but also image material such as snippets from kitsch postcards or art postcards collected by the educated classes. The colored thread used to attach the objects to the picture has been positioned in such a way as to incorporate it in linear form into the composition, thus making the objects themselves an integral part. An object often has an abstract, geometric shape but occasionally real objects are also included. The result is tiny, three-dimensional relief-type pictures comprising only “ready-mades”. Similar to Duchamp’s “ready-mades”, they become an object of art simply through the artistic act of choice which is confirmed as such by the very act of being displayed in an exhibition context. Then they turn material again and assume their own new meaning when utilized within the composition and combined with other objects.

In contrast to a montage by Kurt Schwitters, no artistic process takes place to combine all objects to create a unique composition; in Annegret Bleisteiner’s oeuvre, objects are cleaned before being used, retain their initial, luminous colors and clearly reveal their origin. Even if they have been lifted out of their original functional context they continue to tell their story and thus start to lead a strange life of their own within the picture. On the one hand, they become a relic defying time – this is a characteristic that they have taken with them from their previous context – on the other hand, they assume a neutral graphic form (e.g. the red tip of the New Year’s rocket becomes a red cone) that is open to new interfaces and meanings. Only then do they become a bearer of feelings as their title suggests.

The objects as used in the “250 Feelings” are both abstract and bearers of historical perspective. This unsolvable parallelism of concepts stays with them like an “ink blob picture”, always tilting from one meaning to the other, or from one context of meaning to the other. For example, the small plastic figure of the building worker with the yellow helmet in “Composure” (p. 50) originates from a toy box in a children’s room. In this context it marks the haptic miniaturization of reality. With its help, the adult explains the reality outside to the child or the child explains it to itself while playing; they can each structure this reality and, by handling it, take possession of the same. By being firmly stitched to the picture base, this figure still remains a toy and as it cannot be picked up it becomes a distant object of observation, it adopts other expressive qualities. It also conveys naïve, childlike games and their creative potential and at the same time broaches adult issues, e.g. the social context of the building worker, the gaudiness of the world of plastic where he came from, its dubious nature and consequences, and so on. Each object is thus characterized by a simultaneity of many meanings

with which the viewer can juggle to his own liking; the title is merely a stimulus, it is not illustrated by the forms of the images, but just accompanies these and encourages playful, intuitive interaction.

Plastic in itself would be ironic enough in an artistic context. It is the typical material of the 20th century and symbolizes the fun and throw-away society. On the one hand it is worthless, for temporary use only; on the other hand it is indestructible like classical bronze figures. It could almost be described as the involuntary bronze of the 20th century. In contrast to this, it is however not a precious, expensive material but a cheap, trashy one that happens to be extremely durable – the latter being more of a problem than an advantage, unless of course it is transformed into an object of art where eternity is welcome. But should this be a throw-away eternity? This irony attacks the work of art within the work of art itself and makes it topical. Annegret Bleisteiner does not proceed with the conceptional strictness of e.g. an artist like Kosuth but almost challenging this, she creates an array of feelings and emotions executed so meticulously as if it involved objects from a butterfly collection – whereby this can only be an absurd venture as feelings can neither be clearly differentiated nor distinctly classified.

Consequently, the “250 Feelings” are not hanging on the wall but lying on a table-like installation. The visitor is confronted with the whole colorful world of domesticity. He is invited to take a seat at the table of feelings. By extending this invitation, the perfect housewife shows off her ability in the private sphere and crowns it with her homemade table decorations quite according to the classic tradition of the female character. Do Annegret Bleisteiner’s embroidered pictures reflect the utopia of the intact world of domesticity created by the devoted, do-it-yourself housewife? “Long thread, lazy girl” – embroidery is a feminine pastime that has symbolized the decency of tamed femininity since the Middle Ages. Knitting was not bad either according to Rosemarie Trockel; does Annegret Bleisteiner really focus on this feminine task?

No food appears on the table of “250 Feelings”, the table decorations have gone their own way and turned into a picture on the table – quite a different type of panel painting. The length of the table, its position in the center of the room, accessible from all sides, gives it a festive, official quality. It is an invitation to dine; the only question is what knights are expected? In any case they can choose from 250 feelings on the buffet, each in a handy size, and by being tied to one particular feeling they do at least seem to be under control. The showy, brightly colored array of “Feelings” recalls less processes of inwardness but rather the gaudiness of more one-dimensional feelings as they are presented in advertising images or comics. Each individual feeling is captured in certain forms and colors as well as in suitable dynamics, packed in handy “Pandora Boxes”. But woe to the knight who opens them, who dares to question the one-dimensionality of advertising emotions or

perhaps even the possibility of portraying feelings and emotions per se. Portraying means wanting to control something. But portraying also means focusing on a theme, allowing space, providing a visual rendering. Let’s leave the flickering feelings exposed on the showy “all-over” of the picture to welcome us.

THE KITCHEN IS KITCHNAPPED (pp. 44–47)

After five laborious sets of steps, the viewer can now sit down and take a breather. He or she is surrounded by a kitchen, a real kitchen, straight out of the confines of a built-in kitchen in a small terraced house with green shutters. Kitchen coziness in stark contrast to the unfurnished, hostile Bunker? A tiny oasis of domesticity and tranquility, of reflection for anyone who does not have to work there but can simply enjoy the active contemplation of the viewer? The pieces of furniture, taken right out of their utility function, tell of the fashion of a certain period that is not so long gone. Brought into the context of the exhibition as a “ready-made”, they seize hold of this situation and occupy the room with their sheer size and great presence; they convert its appearance, create a new context themselves and add the kitchen context to the exhibition context. The viewers remember the heyday of such country style kitchens which they might even have had themselves; they remember people who used to work in them, conversations at the kitchen table – while the viewer goes back down the timeline, the Bunker recedes. Recalled time is attached to the Bunker’s frozen real-time.

In the exhibition context those people who used the kitchen are of course not present, but they are documented in the traces of use; they are the only ones to have used the kitchen, nobody else. Similar to Andy Warhol’s time capsules, they store the memories of the nameless user, of a busy, creative housewife – but was she really so cozily nice?

A television stands on the rounded kitchen work surface. To provide the housewife with some entertainment in the midst of her rather monotonous daily chores, the same work, day in day out, her “rituale di vita” à la Kounellis? Oh no – no cozy housewives as the videos speak another language. They date back to the artist’s “Kitchnapping” period; they are themselves almost historical documents from a recent phase of the artist’s work. Who and what was Kitchnapping?

kitchnapping manifest

“a lemon with plugs in it, a bet who can Hoover up most pigs, funnels attached as enlarged silicon breasts, a Barbie doll is drilled open and finely sliced with great skill, a double phallus rotates on the kitchen whisk – any other dreams going? – housewives’ fantasies – for as Thomas Hübsch hastened to note: “a thousand things need love”.

with kitchnapping, dreams come true; in the plastic aesthetics from authentics to curvers picked up on a shopping spree at Karstadt or flicked into

one's own kitchen at a mouseclick – the icons of solitary housework, armed with pink rubber gloves, are maltreated to the rhythm of the pictures, or hover alone in the oily finish of the masterpiece, or fill up all-over photos, or... . would you care for a citrus press in hues from squeaky-yellow to vomit-orange, or perhaps you would prefer a pink furry heart to squeeze and cuddle? the housewife breathes her permanent, ineffable smile down the telephone until even the most stolid cannot bear it any longer.

kitchnapping – housewives' art with three sides to it: kitchen, kitsch and kidnapping. Items of daily use – kitchen utensils – are kidnapped – stolen from the kitchen aesthetics of the world of commodities, gaudy designs made for funny people, for after all if a woman has to do such sad chores, then she should at least do them cheerfully.

kitchnapping takes the role of the housewife seriously, brings it to a head until a cheeky, creative personality rises out of the broken fragments of tristesse. a group of female artists from different genres are on stage that let out their fetishes with humor, irony, sadism and aggression to penetrate the dark corners of forbidden things.

kitchnapping – that means heidrun waadt and annegret bleisteiner & friends. together they transport this role to the exhibition space, a place least suited of all – namely the role that has been eliminated in the "white cube", a chunk of real life, created out of the very dregs of the social community.

who really wants to be a housewife? you can't lose your face any longer with kitchnapping. keep your happy housewife's soul!

part of her that is still a child at heart plays a cruel game with its plastic objects as surrogate dolls. it is no longer the cozy little home at the stove that proudly meets the viewer's eye, but the solid mass of the new economy kitchen cyborgs, a cross between hadaly and eliza, straight out of the metropolis, the secret sisters of robocop with a permanent, programmed smile. the bad girls underneath the swimming caps move dimensions, distort perspectives. kitchnapping as a new form of art allows its material and subject to surpass themselves. plastic as a kitchinsignia as of today replaces the iron sculptures of eternal times. it becomes a work of art of the future that may be classified according to the laws of half-life and separation of waste. the artist as a housewife, the housewife as an artist – the protagonists have it to themselves. they construct and deconstruct according to a reversible equation: housework is craft is handicraft is – via female artists – art. it's the product that speaks. like time, this is fast, diverse and colorful: ranging from an ephemeral video, from a photo as pretty as wrapping paper, from the exhibition installation made by haribo to an oil painting that is not at all boring, a canvas memory that has freed itself from the burden of its history.

... and should it happen that there is a ring of cyber-feminism, it is not a coincidence; any resemblance is intended. one should not take this too seriously as kitchnapping plays with wit, irony, black humor – that's for sure." ¹ So much for working in the kitchen, for the end of a comfortable dream and the true "desperate housewives" who develop cheeky, creative potential out of the fraught monotony of work that never receives its due.

“ÜBUNG IN DER VIERTEN DIMENSION”

EXERCISE IN THE FOURTH DIMENSION (pp. 38–43)

On the floor in the long room there are two parallel panels of blue gymnastic mats whose brown leather corners recall the indescribable boredom of sports lessons at school. The mats have been positioned so as to indicate a run-up to the gymnastic apparatus, but this has been omitted and the mats end right at the wall: the gymnast can only jump against the wall. The installation welcomes use; every visitor might have experienced such a mat personally. As a static object it conjures up the dynamics of movement due to the functional context from which it originates.

But you can't do gymnastics on these mats as two monitors are lying there like stumbling blocks, floating in a relaxed way on their backs like a gymnast after an exercise. There are no gymnastics really taking place today, that has been left to the media reality of digital video. There is no noise in the room; it is only the video images that convey the panting and the sweating of the protagonists.

You can see three gymnasts: two men and a woman. Their bodies – fully focused on the exercise and its perfect execution – are depicted in photographs. Like space ships ready to take off and illuminated at the edges, they float through the monochrome video screen. Then they meet, overlap, form dynamic layers on the flat screen, constantly changing, above and underneath one another. They were taken in different perspectives and sizes, and as if they were about to fall out of or into the picture, similar to Tintoretto's floating figures whose place in the picture is still unknown. The lack of spatiality of the background makes the bodies appear flat in spite of their real three-dimensional quality. The result is an irritating, surreal effect that is increased as the material is not a video but a still photo which is only set in motion in the video by means of animation. This movement however contrasts greatly to the movement in photographs. If this happens in a split second photos appear to be drifting in slow motion.

The photos are documentary shots of a sporting event and thus proof of reality. However, against the plane surface they appear flat, alien like UFOs. In the fourth dimension they meet the "planiten" of Malevich and any other fantasies that might be there. The dream of the fourth dimension as dreamed by Malevich, Lissitzky or van Doesburg is not yet over. In their pictures too, they make this dream material by employing a form of hopeless multi-dimensionality that is created by means of the varying size and dimensions of the bodies against a two-dimensional surface, or by the very layering of various, two-dimensional bodies onto a two-dimensional surface. The intention was not to generate a fourth dimension in the sense of physics, but rather a dream of an almost romantic, virtual space. And yet Einstein's relative time theory was not without significance – time as a fourth dimension? And how can this be expressed in terms of images? Lissitzky was an artist who tried to capture it

within a three-dimensional spatial picture in his “join-in works of art” such as the “Proun Room” by means of the viewer’s movement. From a physical point of view, this was merely a doubtful attempt that was doomed to fail. But attempts remain, and continue in vain. Seen against the strength of this desire – albeit highly absurd – any picture is dwarfed, frozen and becomes a mere pattern that slowly and surely shifts its way through a room without any volume. The photographer has captured the moment of greatest concentration and tension, the climax of the exercise, the moment in which the figure, caught in the air, relaxes tension and returns to the state of an athletic body, the moment prior to landing, before the “wave off”. The photo is a dream that has become a picture, only visible in slow motion, in a special photo or a painted picture.

EXIT THROUGH ENTRANCE

The viewer has finally reached the top floor. But the Bunker does not keep its promise. It does indeed look like a tower and is even built in this way with a central staircase and individual floors spiraling around it; at the end, there is however no viewing platform with a vast stretch of a panorama as anticipated which one has surely deserved after the tedious, claustrophobic confinement of the staircase. No – after having conquered six floors, one simply lands more or less in the cellar and can then only go back downstairs. The feeling of not being at the top but down below is enhanced by the rooms on the 6th floor being painted black. One’s perception of space starts moving, the top is sensed as the bottom although the viewer knows only too well that is he is at the top as he has climbed up all that way. One cannot easily rid oneself of this contradiction between feeling and intellect, and this is what creates the unique, irritating atmosphere of the 6th floor. In these black rooms directly underneath the concrete ceiling some four meters thick, the visitor senses the building’s self-willed “cycle” very strongly; a building that is not the result of any aesthetic architectural concept but purely functional space, a survival machine without any aesthetics: the walls are not plastered, there is no proper floor; the height and length of the room are determined solely by the ratio between stability and vibration fatigue limit. It is intended for sheer survival, not for coziness. It resembles a giant shaft driven up into the air; no place for lingering but a place of hard graft, and here that means: survival.

“ZEITMASCHINE”

TIME MACHINE (pp. 58/59)

In this reversed spatial order, underground is located above ground. The conveyor screws work monotonously. The hacking noise of a machine lures the visitor upstairs. Like in the installation at the Deutsches Museum in Munich that reconstructs real working situations of daily life, this dark room could lead to hell, down the mine. But there is no miner caught in the shaft. On reaching the source of the noise, one

can see a sewing machine on the table in the bright striplighting. It works incessantly, sewing an imaginary fabric. It works as if possessed, moves and then doesn’t, intensely and laboriously up and down on the spot. Every stitch is carried out with the same precision and conscientiousness. It should be transporting the fabric, be making a three-dimensional product out of a two-dimensional material, but its obsession is in vain: there is no fabric under the sewing foot and no seamstress is sitting on the chair that awaits her.

She has left the light on, just pushed her chair quickly aside but the workplace is empty. It stands alone ready to receive the visitor. But what work should one do here? Torn out of its functional context, the sewing machine becomes a symbol of an activity that is monotonously repeated in a loop – a machine operation in itself, as no product can or should be made.

On closer inspection of the “scene of the crime” it soon becomes apparent that it is not a workplace in the textile industry that has been vacated, but this provides insight into the artist’s work situation. As the clearly visible traces of paint reveal, the work table and the chair are from the artist’s studio. But this observation does not make the task easier for the viewer. What has this hacking sewing machine in the cave got to do with the artist’s work? Let’s first leave art history from Plato to French Surrealism aside, and Rebecca Horn’s hacking machines too whose aggressive mechanisms become the symbol of dehumanized hurt. Annegret Bleisteiner calls her installation “Time Machine”. The stamping rhythm drives the timeline forward whilst freezing it in monotonous, uniform repetition similar to Eric Satie’s “Vexations”. The perception of time that is tied to sequences and change, e.g. over the course of the day, is altered in this place outside the realms of time and space. Like the nameless hero in H.G. Wells’ “Time Machine”, the visitor can now go on board. The perception of the machine can change time. Since Einstein’s special Theory of Relativity it has become clear that time is not an absolute quantity but a relative one, and that time runs differently within systems which move in a relative relationship to one another. The faster we move, the more slowly time passes. Whilst the sewing machine dashes along, we ourselves become increasingly slower. Science is still debating as to whether journeys into time will ever be possible; Gödel proved they are possible in purely mathematical terms, for according to Wikipedia’s thin lexical knowledge: “A Time Machine is a machine for carrying out journeys into time. According to the present state of knowledge, the construction of time machines is not possible”.

Annegret Bleisteiner’s “Time Machine” is an option, a promise just like the airbed at the entrance; an artistic test arrangement with which the visitor can transcend his or her personal sense of time. It is not without reason that the Time Machine faces the “Exit from the Duality”; with its rhythm, it introduces this new option to which it is attached like an assistant.

ART ON VARIOUS TERRITORIES

PETER V. BRINKEMPER

“AUSSTIEG AUS DER DUALITÄT”

EXIT FROM DUALITY (pp. 60/61)

The last black room is almost completely filled with a white PVC ball 2 m in diameter which, suspended just a brief distance from the ceiling and the floor, appears to be floating in the room. Like the ball of a giant, it forces itself into the confined room just 2.30 m high that seems to be even more cramped than it really is. This giant ball optically diminishes both the room and viewer. The scale of ball to room to person seems to be reversed. As the “Time Machine” changes one’s perception of time, it is here the perception of space that is different. A ball is after all one of the basic human toys; it symbolizes a pronounced enthusiasm for games governed by rules. But this giant ball has a somewhat ominous character. The video images, for which it serves as a support, corroborate this feeling. What it shows is the yellow-red blaze of burning logs in a Finnish stove. Due to the distortion of the image on the curved surface of the ball, the image looks like a photo of a giant ball of gas in space at first; but if the viewer follows the sequences in the video, the fire will become increasingly clear. In spite of this, the optical distortion seems to provide the ball with an unreal quality that is even amplified by the accompanying sound of the gentle gurgling of a stream that is flowing along quite happily – something that is quite unexpected. Water and fire, the two basic elements, do not make a very dramatic impact here but are well-behaved and domesticated for home use. Air is not much better off. Safely enclosed within the ball, it is controllable too, put to use.

The three elements are so cozy, and so consigned to usefulness? The fact that things could be quite different is only suggested by a faint breath of air coming through the only window in the Bunker – a mere hint. Just as daylight loses its strength on the long journey through the thick walls of the Bunker, the outside air does find its way inside. Street noise is far away, it sounds like soft mumbling, like a distant dream. But what about the fourth element: earth? Its presence can be imagined, in the reversed room in the tower of the Bunker with its cold, damp darkness, within the suspended, planet-like ball, in the sounds of a mine from the “Time Machine”. The four elements, the four dimensions, things happen simultaneously, overlap – this a constantly recurring theme in Annegret Bleisteiner’s oeuvre. Just where the window shaft seems to indicate the chance of an exit out of the almost hermetically closed system, the intended overlapping of the elements creates a new whole from the experience of “all-over” that is far beyond abstracted pairs of opposites and their logical combinatorics.

The visual artist Annegret Bleisteiner cuts across media, formats and genres, working in networked, parallel worlds. The commonplace nature of things, the casual positioning of the encircled motifs is not at all based on any factual reproduction (the first look deceives), but on ironic reconstruction and poetic density.

“wave off” is about the rediscovery of liberated, constantly re-programmable body-tuning whose dream fantasies are the dynamic source of transforming and remodeling the real and the mental territory. Signs and lines are bundled into brilliantly colored streams of energy, time and space, into impressions and emotions. Conceptual spheres metamorphose into concrete, mystical portals, into gateways of new experience.

Annegret Bleisteiner’s works are not neutral portrayals, not passive theoretical showcases, but they embrace active technological systems of inscription that generate visual, auditory, word-based and tactile layers and codes. Previous and new patterns of perception are set into vibrating motion until the medial track-change kicks in.