



Sitting Circles

When the artist Judy Chicago had her students walk around in a circle in 1972, everyone spoke about themselves, their interests and goals, and everyone listened at the same time. In this manner, she wanted to convey self-empowerment and an alternative to the existing, unequal power structures - fundamental for Chicago in order to think and promote individual and social change.¹

Circular arrangements as well as coming together in a circle, have long served as a method for finding solutions to complex problems and also as a tool for dealing with many-faceted contexts. **Sitting Circles**, the title of the exhibition, is to be understood ambiguously: on the one hand it refers to the spatial arrangement of artistic works and the existing relations of materials and elements within them, and on the other hand it is a metaphor and concept for social and cultural interactions, structures and circulations. Similar to Virginia Woolf who, in her essay »A Room of One's Own« (1929), calls for a space for female writers in a literal sense as a place to work, and in a metaphorical sense as a recognized position in the art world.²

From their respective angles, the works developed for this exhibition examine how objects and our material environment are in close interaction with social, ecological, cultural and individual processes. A look at their use, appropriation and production lets us get a glimpse of the variety and vibrancy of their connections.³ An active, lively exchange emerges: What kind of relationship do we have to materials and objects? And furthermore: How do they relate to our thoughts and emotions in the past, present and future?

¹ Cf. Judy Chicago, *Feminist Art Education: Made in California*, in: Jill Fields (ed.), *Entering the Picture: Judy Chicago, the Fresno Feminist Art Program and the Collective Wisdom of Women Artists*, New York: Routledge 2011, <http://www.judychicago.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/made-in-california.pdf> [15.5.2019].

² Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, p. 92, 1929. http://seas3.elte.hu/coursematerial/PikliNatalia/Virginia_Woolf_-_A_Room_of_Ones_Own.pdf [15.05.2019].

³ Cf. Diana Coole, *Der neue Materialismus. Die Ontologie und Politik der Materialisierung*, in: Susanne Witzgall, Kerstin Stakemeier (ed.), *Macht des Materials / Politik der Materialität*, Zürich; Berlin: Diaphanes 2014, pp. 29–46.

Unlike the infinite resources of the world of fantasy, those of the material world are finite. Science fiction, as Ursula K. Le Guin understands the literary genre, is »a way of trying to describe what is going on, what people actually do and feel, how people relate to everything else in this vast sack, this belly of the universe, this womb of things to be and tomb of things that were, this unending story. [...] Still there are seeds to be gathered and room in the bag of stars.«⁴ In which way are visual artistic practices, working with materials and objects, another possibility to carry all this? And how do they create rooms of their own, converge in a space, and offer alternatives in order to open up new perspectives and collaborations?

Ana Alenso creates phenomenological cycles from used, old materials - primarily industry and mass production leftovers. How do the systems we have built function, and how can we get out of their circuits? »**Vertical Waters**« (2019) looks at water as a symbol of life on this earth and as a symbol of hierarchies that arise in the course of the exploitation of our natural resources. It flows in a closed circuit through an installation consisting of hoses, metal, PVC and plastic. In this living system we encounter the elements, we can feel them. The inevitable, yet intangible, takes on a form in which resistance to environmental, social and economic imbalances is formulated and calls for a participation in this resistance. In this manner, established patterns of thinking are meant to be interrupted, and -given the fear of environmental disasters caused by the pollution of our planet - perspectives for new options for participation, agency and usage are created.

In her artistic practice, **Ada Van Hoorebeke** creates chains by connecting people and things. »**Daisy Chain**« (2019) is part of the installation series »**Lace Simulations**« (2018/19) and consists of individual elements suspended from the ceiling by a hanging system. Viewed from the entrance, they join together to form an overall image that can be entered and traversed. Visitors encounter numerous references to the production and origin of the individual, contrasting objects and materials: metals from old car parts, oxblood flooring, fabrics, or embroidery and ceramics, which are the result of precise cultural craftsmanship. The artisanal production such as dyeing with the peels of pomegranates is disclosed and set in contrast to mass-produced consumer goods. Van Hoorebeke wants to activate practices and objects in order to reshape and arrange her environment.

⁴ Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, in: Cheryl Glotfelty, Harold Fromm (ed.), *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literacy Ecology*, Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press 1996, pp. 149–154, p. 154.

Okka-Esther Hungerbühler's paintings depict fantastic situations, which - the way that they are portrayed - cannot occur in reality. Her creature-like papier-mâché sculptures, which always have a front and a back, appear to be creatures from another world. They come together in a circle which expresses their relation to each other. In »**Stimmungskanone**« (life of the party) the use of craft materials and free forms conveys lightness and opposes hierarchical thought. We are constantly challenged to grasp the connections that exist between the visible and the imaginary. If we follow the pictures and figures, we immerse ourselves in another universe. New perspectives are formed, thoughts receive a new direction.

It is the way male artists have historically shaped society's view of women, that **Cosima to Knyphausen** challenges in her work. If the history of literature can be rewritten retrospectively, is something similar possible in the realm of painting? Illustrations from the manuscripts of the French philosopher and writer Christine de Pizan, who lived in the 13th and 14th century, can be found on large-format fabrics. Images of the motif of the reading woman, across various epochs, emerge on small paintings. Classic, iconographic references are adopted and integrated into Knyphausen's current practice, where they happen against her own, everyday topics. Without committing herself to a particular technique or a specific material, a sequence of works often comes into being. Appearing at times sketch-like, other times laboriously brushed on in several layers, a transience and openness prevails in her works - as if everything is in process.

Having been born in one country, grown up in another, and being based in yet another country nowadays, while moving freely between them, **kate-hers RHEE** creates connections - between continents and regional cultural peculiarities, between the past and the present, between the self and the other. The cautious but radical transformation of cultural objects crosses, in a lively debate, the exploration of her own identity and cultural origin, and issues such as gender, migration and global injustice. Proceeding from mythology, »**Seven Sisters and the Lost Daughter**« recalls all the forgotten, lost, missing women, girls, mothers, daughters. The »bamboo women,« a traditional household item in mostly Asian countries, are objects that are embraced while sleeping in order to enable a cooling process by circulating fresh air that reaches the body. **kate-hers RHEE** equips these intimate items with sports visors designed for the modern Korean woman, which serve to protect her from UV radiation in order to preserve a fair complexion - a sign of youthfulness and belonging to a higher social class. Illuminated from the inside, they form a constellation of stars in the darkness that

has already been illustrated on the Nebra Sky Disk and can still be seen with the naked eye in the night sky.

Text by Marie-Christin Lender

Translation by Saskia Köbschall