

Stephan Berg
The rebellion of things

When viewing Veronika Veit's works, one feels an almost corporeal amazement at the intensity of permutation and transformatory potential inherent in objects of everyday use. The title ›Halbe Sachen‹, applied to her catalogue published at the end of 1999, was a metaphorical indication of a crucial dimension in the approach to her work. Every object which comes under her artistic scrutiny is subjected to a metamorphosis during which the formal and functional qualities of the object are dissolved in favour of a new possibility of form. The ribs of an ordinary radiator become the basis for a »Heizroller« (1999, p. 21), out of which a yellowish foaming tumescence made of fibreglass cement swells. Inspired by its innate tendency to wrinkle, a plain and harmless carpet is transformed into a caterpillar-like rolled creature (»Teppichroller«, 1999, p. 26).

It is the surrounding environment and not just the spaces between objects that interests the artist so profoundly. In her »Formwert-kapsel« (p. 19f.), created at the end of the 1990s, Veronika Veit made organoid, pinky-white styrofoam coverings for tubes of tooth-paste, children's dummies, hair clips or hair-dryer attachments. The coverings greatly magnify the objects embedded in them and thus alienate them from each other creating an individual corporeality. In the »Kapseln« from 2004, this theme reappears in a slightly modified form. The capsule, strongly reminiscent of a cocoon, often made of leather or fabric, has a viewing window through which one can see miniature, painted armchairs made of synthetic material. The comfortable materiality of the outer shell acts as a sort of initiatory aid into the inner world of the object, following the laws of an artificial model world. Only formally related to the ›Living Units‹ and ›A-Z Escape Vehicles‹ by Andrea Zittel, these capsules are surreal hermaphrodites between the world of the natural and the artificial. They are invitations to a world in which things have begun to develop a nascent life of their own and where the macrocosm and the microcosm coalesce in a chorus of confusion.

From the individual objects and the dialectic of their encapsulation and disclosure, of their enclosing and revelation, a direct path leads to the obviously more space-related installative works of the last two years. It almost appears as though it is no longer fulfilling enough for the individual organoid thing-creatures to exist merely for themselves. Now they are populating the world, which in its turn is only a reflection of reality in the form of model stage sets. The transmuted, flesh-coloured, fast food styrofoam containers, which were used in a gallery project in Berlin to serve a three-course menu to select guests, are to be found again on a large-format lambda print. Piled up on the floor, the windowsill and the table of an otherwise empty room, they create the impression of an army of alien eggs which are just on the threshold of hatching unknown life. In a model kitchen refrigerator, yellow shapes have ensconced themselves, their drips petrifying to splash circlets; from the computer monitor, chains of blue globules ooze from yellow spheres in an endless copy of themselves as the picture on the screen repeats the scene ad infinitum. In these pictures, the boastful, sucking, lip-smacking independent existence of this biomorph world of things has gained – and calculatedly so – in relation to the earlier works a subliminally more aggressive form. A rampant infection seems to have befallen all the objects, and one which, once established, threatens to engulf everything with which it comes in contact. This is what happens to the mechanic who, in a further photographic work (»Mechaniker«, 2004, p. 38), attempts to repair a model-built escalator while the handrail has suddenly developed a life of its own and rears out like a serpent (»Rolltreppe«, 2004, p. 15).

Also in the new sculptural objects and scenic installations, the world of things is subject to a movement which apparently does not permit of power of disposal from the human side. A cleaning rag, made of dental plaster and painted blue, twists itself like a whirlpool around the drain set into a metal plate as if it wanted to consume it. And we don't even want to know what could come pouring out of the red spout of a hose, nestling on a blue and white striped towel – made again of dental plaster. Seen like this, »Stapel« (2005, p. 9) is also not only a reflection on elementary sculptural principles but also an impressive image for the pulsing rebellion of the thing versus its functional determination and mood of desertion. The most recent works escort us into a closed-circuit world in which the liberated object-creatures revolve continually around themselves and in which an escape from their self-centred circumvolution no longer seems possible. »Sendepause« (2005, p. 62) is composed of a bilious green, life-sized synthetic imitation of a leather armchair, a television and an opaque hinged window in the wall through which a green mass decorated with blue flowers froths into the room. The picture on the television also depicts these bulges, which seem to press up against the screen with rubbery, abrasive sounds. Here, interior and exterior merge together to become a bio-technological nightmare in which the actual subject remains merely as a dwindling presence.

It is just this form of absence that is the subject of »Schlafstörung« (2004, p. 72). In front of a fake bed with a painted mattress, synthetic pillows and a slightly rumpled synthetic blanket is a television showing water droplets in an endless loop originating off-screen and dripping onto a grey floor. This is accompanied by quiet sounds of dripping which reduces this almost-still-life to an eternal, melancholy cycle of agony. The desolation of the empty replica of a bed place corresponds to the monotony of the falling droplets which can not even multiply themselves as they dry up before this can happen. In the end, things interact only between themselves. But we have to remain outside.

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