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The umbilical cords of the information tumult
A room installation by Veronika Veit

In the global information society with its digital image generating media, wireless LAN and worldwide web, the nerve cords and material substance of these omnipresent communications strategies are invisible – apparently invisible, because they suit the image of a cool, clean-cut computer laboratory as little as do the never-visible mountains of garbage in the stylized ethnic images of the ›National Geographic‹. And yet, all this high-tech apparatus is manifested in simple plastic shapes of highly mediocre aesthetics, in endless loops of cable and rows of electric plugs. These objects define a space that is usually not perceived as such - living space or working space – as ›invisible architecture‹:[1] a non-structural space in which the human being operates in a networked system, ›the human is more of an ape, a Tarzan moving through a jungle in which he has no overview of the whole, swinging his way hand over hand along guidelines, barriers, marking lines and lane markers‹.

Veronika Veit brings this space to life: she makes the umbilical cord visible to which the materialized information modules are connected by reinventing all those parts that serve to create the worlds of image and information. She transforms the cheap plastic housing of printers, servers, scanners and copiers into objects of finely grained cherry wood and follows this with a turbulent flood of hardware elements that can be added to at will with a theatrical collection of art objects. She transforms greyish tangles of cable into shining tubes and the stereotyped clicking of the plotter into an electronic tapestry of music.

And still, this mutation of the omnipresent computer environment is a process synonymous with making perceptible objects that are unworthy of being depicted as part of the confrontation with the prohibition of the image. Veit's laptops and desktops are picture-less monitors – as opposed to the blocks and cubes of technical machinery seen as visible and precious objects. Here we have an installation that has as its topic what is normally only found – in an artistic context, in the field of the new media – in the instructions for setting up installations. For instance, the Polish artist Miroslaw Rogala requires an infrared camera, laser disc player, projector, PC, loudspeakers and audio cassette player for his interactive installa-tion ›Lover's Leap‹[2] – but the equipment vegetates in an unseen room, hidden, in slavish readiness to create ephemeral images. It is not without irony that Veronika Veit gets to work on her transformations. She gives the trashy and disparaged media of an imperceptible but continuously available information network new dimensions of aesthetics and longevity. ›Irony‹, says Walter Benjamin would be an effective medium to correspond to the idea of a work, as ›it not only does not destroy the work being attacked, but indeed brings it closer to immutability.‹[3]

1   Franz Xaver Baier, Erected Space. In: Kunstforum, Bd. 143, 1999, S. 130ff.
2   Zitiert nach: ZKM Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, Hardware Software Artware. Karlsruhe, 1997.
3   Walter Benjamin, Das Kunstwerk. In: Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. I.1. Frankfurt/Main, 1980, S. 86.