

The Broken Deer

I found this little ceramic sculpture of a female deer in one of my “detoured” walks in Berlin. She was hiding at the bottom of an old and dirty plastic crate, in one of the stalls of the Tier Garden flea market. I couldn’t figure out how many pieces of her body were missing, but I felt immediately attracted to her defective condition. The vendor was very surprised I had an interest for a broken object. I bargained with the seller and took her to my studio. Later I learned that deers are animals that live between borders, in the spaces created by the confluence of 2 ecosystems, transitional areas between forests and thickets (for cover) and prairie and savanna (open space). In ecology this area is called eco-tone

(a transitional zone between two communities containing the characteristic species of each), a combination of eco (logy) plus –tone, from the Greek tonos or tension – in other words, a place where ecologies are in tension.

Few days later I spoke with an artist friend and asked her if she would know of any place in the city where I could find used canvases *, she suggested the dumpster at her Art School. I went there and I found several canvases with considerable amounts of acrylic paint * on them, the colors were so off and the lines and composition so amateur, I instantly fell in love with them, rolled them up, and* took them to my studio where they joined the collection of amateur paintings I found in other flea markets, in other cities. For whatever reason I thought I could make them work together with the deer, I didn’t know yet how, though.

The dismembered deer, bearing traces of having been mistreated, this organic disorder suggests an emotional conflict, between the uncompromising straight geometrical order and the high degree of freedom and tolerance of such an entropic state. When does the feeling become meaning? As Yona Friedman says, order and disorder are different sides of the same coin. Well, places inhabited by these leftover objects, can conceal the ordered system, the ordered structures that once ruled them. These places in the city, activated by the free will of their inhabitants, the unplanned ones, the ones that can’t be drawn in a map, the urban negative spaces, this camouflaged disorder on hybrid areas, are the ones that interest me. These interruptions of the flow of the system, the spaces that are not usable, wandering through these gaps, reflect what I have called “architectures of disorder” that will* become imagined architecture.

These areas of disorder create dis-orientation, since they lack linear points of reference, and this is the method that the situationist group will follow to “derive” in the city, in their hope to find more direct ways of experiencing life, un-mediated ways of being in contact with reality. I can’t memorize these places, I can’t even classify them, as a memory exercise, I will bring in these artifacts and will arrange them in a new space, where they will not be that diluted, where they will be transformed in an object of contemplation? I have to mention to this purpose an essay about Mirosław Balka by John Hutchinson who mentions Christopher Bollas’:

"Aesthetic moments" are those points in life when we feel held and embraced by the spirit of things that are being considered or contemplated. And although such moments can subsequently be explained and articulated, they are fundamentally wordless occasions, notable less for thoughts than for the density of the subject's feeling. These experiences, says Bolas, are existential memories, non-representational recollections conveyed through a sense of the uncanny. They are registered through an experience in being, rather than in mind, because they recall the time, before words existed, when a relationship with the other was the essence of life.

The 'aesthetic moment*' is an evocative resurrection of an early ego condition, an instant when the subject is 'captured' by an object and enjoys the sensation of being engaged in a meaningful, and perhaps even reverential, experience. But the pursuit of such moments is an endless search for something in the future that actually resides in the past. In reality, we are looking for 'transformational objects' that promise to change us, to bring us into harmony with the non-self - at least within the limited confines of a cultural framework.

I would imagine new structures using these found urban detritus as building units, units that will get distributed, repeated, arranged into ephemeral configurations, into thousands of choreographed moments, into a multiple and different ensembles. I will build using trial and error, doing and undoing, an imprecise method, an amateur system that will allow me to make, to improvise, and to construct a poem for the future. I will imagine the future using the past, Vladimir Nabokov's observation, "The future is but the obsolete in reverse".

I would place myself in this space which contains multiple possibilities, will re-arrange the material, will dream the yet, unknown, city.

What is the content of these found fragments? What would be the meaning of a broken deer placed in a gallery space? A symbolic element, an animal that survives in the space between. Aren't we all survivors? The deer suggests a model for survival. Isn't the city nowadays an area of friction? An animal body's split into pieces, the city and its fragments, I have to think about the relationship to Gordon Matta Clark and his split houses, and his cutting of walls and floors, ... and the relationship of nature to manmade rules, nature and constructed environment and the destroying of a structure to expose, to reveal internal and concealed structures and the assimilation and extension of these actions from the physical realm into the social realm.

I can understand how the situationists would hate le Corbusier. How can one be deprived of a certain degree of uncertainty? How one can live without the unplanned spaces of the cities, the ones that are out of the urban planner's agenda? How can one live in a world without dreams?

After several walks, and several visits to other flea markets and several trips to other few dumpsters, I felt I had gathered plenty of materials to work with. Next was the gallery space, I will have to negotiate these city fragments with the exhibition site and the memory of this site. I went to the space and checked what kind of material leftovers I could find from previous exhibitions, and I found some wood sticks, plywood sheets, some metal frames. Good enough. I was ready to start working on the installation.

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