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The Line of Life

Time phenomena in the work of Frenzi Rigling

Frenzi Rigling finds remarkably direct images for various concepts of time which would be difficult to imagine without such visualisation. These images are present especially in the diary in *Diagramm*, 2004-, as transience in *Protokolle*, 1996-98, and growth as a metaphor for linear time-consciousness in *Teppich* 2002-.

For many people, the diary is a means of recording memories and events. Every evening, Frenzi Rigling makes fine-line monochrome drawings on A4 paper of the clothes she has worn that day. She writes the day and date on each sheet, but omits any mention of herself. The day's events and her own frame of mind are documented solely by the chosen garments. What can we tell from this about Frenzi – especially in the absence of colour? Trousers, skirt and dress alternate; this indicates female gender. There is a distinct preference for patterned materials, a leaning towards blouses, often a body-stocking, etc. The person describes herself by means of choice of and taste in clothes, and of course by the fact of drawing. Outlines are drawn with fine strokes; no information is given on dress size, physical dimensions, hair colour, etc. The individual garments, including underwear, are „hung“ by a thin line on an invisible valet stand.

The individual “records” are presented so that they can be read in rows from left to right. In this way, it is possible to survey a year in the life of Frenzi Rigling, distributed over two walls.

The German philosopher Max Dessoir (1867-1947), who founded an association for aesthetic research, called the diary “the line of one's own life”<sup>1</sup>. Irrespective of form and content, whether private diary or artistic expression, a record is kept primarily in order to preserve the present for one's own future, and to document proof of existence for a readership.

With daily records kept since 2004, Frenzi Rigling has set forth proof of her existence; thanks to the reduction to clothing, we can use this as an aid to memory. Thus for the artist, the “hooks” are recorded memories which afford her quick association with the events in her life on the date in question. In addition, she has a clear memory of making each drawing. The viewer looks first for data with some personal association in time.

The omission of the artist's own person enables viewers to “occupy” the garments, thus filling the daily records with their own (hi)story.

A diary (thus also *Diagramm*) are proofs of existence recorded in the here and now, on each day as it comes. The basic unit of time is a day; the days are strung out to a year. Since a fresh drawing has been added each day since 2004, the series is expanding to form a fuller proof of a whole life. On the one hand is the repeated unit of time, the day – to be comfortably taken in at a glance. On the other is the linearity of time, which has a beginning – birth – or as here, the start of the series, but no planned end. At any point in time it is possible to trace the time-line into the past – either in sections or in chronological sequence. All variants are possible.

The subject of *Teppich*, 2002- is a manageable time unit which is also linked to an artistic context, the duration of an exhibition. Once again, this is based on garments, which are now, however, rendered anonymous. Throughout the period of the exhibition, Frenzi Rigling sews one garment to another, forming a carpet, the coordinates of which are the period of the exhibition and the time

the artist spends at work. Here time is spatialised. On the basis of the carpet, we can judge the duration of an exhibition according to the area of the garments. This gives a vivid metaphor for several concepts of time: for transience, for a personal space of time which is significant for the artist but which also allows each viewer to see how a period of time can be materialised. In both examples, the artist demonstrates a phenomenon completely familiar to us, as Edmund Husserl put it in his time-lectures (1905): "Naturally, we all know what time is; it is the most familiar thing of all. But as soon as we attempt to give an account of time-consciousness [...] we get entangled in the most peculiar difficulties, contradictions and confusions."<sup>2</sup> In our thought processes, then, time-consciousness is fraught with so many paradoxes that we have difficulty formulating time in words. Frenzi Rigling offers us several ways of looking at time, and even of comprehending it. On the one hand, the starting-point is always a short, manageable and thus reassuring time unit, constantly expanding. On the other, the individual is at liberty to take any reference point for the purpose of eliciting his own memories.

<sup>1</sup> Max Dessoir, *Die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Wiesbaden 1925

<sup>2</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins*, Tübingen, 2. Auflage, S. 368