

Please, take a seat.

Iris Hutegger – room work, with soil and photographs

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2009 Translation by Antonia Barboric

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A drawing of room named *Sonderanfertigung (special design)*, realised in spitzbart_FORUMTREPPE in Oberasbach near Nuremberg in 2008, gave the impulse to organise a solo show with Iris Hutegger in the production hall dedicated to art located on the premises. In December 2009, she began working there with an alteration of this room drawing during the preparations for the solo show, which was supposed to be presented under the title *Please, take a seat* in spring 2010. The exhibition consisted of various works, which offer an interplay that the spectator immediately comprehends as the works downrightly intertwine. Also, the discovered room with its doors and windows played an important role with the presentation. The first impression upon entering the room is determined through a vast earthy floor arching upwards from the concrete ground of the hall. Iris Hutegger spread a few cubic meter of soil across the room so that the impression of a desert landscape was created.

The scarcity of natural materials is enforced due to a few bunches of dried thyme branches and some green (plastic) grassy plots. At the same time, the artificiality of the hence designed space landscape and the impossibility of permanently settling this ground with plants is perceived. From this work titled *momentan windstill (temporarily windless)*, a very quiet atmosphere emanates, but still it does not appear statically – the soil seems to have spread out over the ground area. An easy breeze would not be astonishing. The observer can go around this scenery, take a seat on provided chairs, take a rest, extensively observe the room installation, listen to the silence, perceive the scent of the soil, and get closer to the other works.

In the midst of the soil area, along the margins, where the room opens up through a large roller shutter and a window towards a wood scenery, there is a clothes rail on which a couple of large-sized photographs – partly folded up – hang like clothes of a collection. Through the soil landscape, the spectator is hindered to get to this clothes rail. He/she, thus, cannot satisfy his/her curiosity but only try to unravel and decode the photographs and the presented works on it via the distance. However, the uncertainty remains.

In another corner, there is the already mentioned flight of stairs, consisting of threads, drawn into the room three-dimensionally, which also leads to a drawn door. This door is perspectively slightly opened, but one

cannot distinguish where it leads to. This filigree thread drawing in the room communicates with a second flight of stair, over which the spectator enters the hall, and with two more doors, a roller shutter and a large window front.

On the walls, there are large-sized, black and white photographs of landscapes, mountains, thicket and ground structures on which coloured threads are sewn onto. Like the windows of the room, which carry the different light or weather atmosphere into the room, the photographs and the soil work point into it and still beyond each other to other areas of the world.

Trains of Thought

Iris Hutegger is, as a border crosser between different genres whose features she annuls and undercuts, a 'space-drawing sculptress'. She stages a found room branded through traces of the past and encourages with the placement of her works an inspection, invites the people to sit down, entices for appropriation. She delivers, thus, a choreography of movement and incorporates the spectator in her intervention. While the 'inspector' gathers all different impressions, while the room, the fragility of the thread drawing, the unreal soil landscape, the natural materials and their haptics, the almost monochrome colour atmosphere, the shadow play and window-mirroring, the weather and exposure to light as dramatic means are absorbed by him/her, his/her walking represents 'trains of thought'. Thereby, between describing concepts and verbal demarcations, contradictions, even an entire devaluation of word meanings in the face of the visible break open. Only the perception of ambiguity, equivocality, and disappointment contribute to the understanding. The core of Iris Hutegger's message lies in the absence of the comprehensible, in the void between word, picture, and meaning.

Hence, due to the contrasting of the mysterious, drawn door with real doors, it is possible to have doubts about its functionality. The drawn stairs and the door as symbol of ascent, sublimation, and target setting bring deception to the world. The spectator asks himself/herself whether and if so, what is found behind a door inscribed WC? And is the landscape behind the window front reality, or part of the artistic intervention? The landscape collection on the clothes rail denies required answers. Are there models of the landscape photographs hanging on the walls noticeable, or does there emerge a world map? Are not all landscapes in this room invented by human world inventions? Does not melancholy of deficiency of all human inventions inhere in them?

The soil work is connected to the photographed landscapes and the mountains in various ways. Both works that appear so raw, bony, massive, lonely and unconquerable, play with the term of nature, but are

not natural at all. In fact, Iris Hüttegger presents the supposed nature as picture of subjective but also, through the course of human history, collected, hence culturally and historically connoted atmosphere. They are, as in a clothes collection for human beings, available, eligible. Thus, landscape – even if it appears monumentally and archaically –, actually is a kind of structure ended by humans. The actual landscape, nature is absent. Both are not known by humans, albeit they yearn for perfection, stringent logic and security, the lost paradise.

This void, felt by the spectator and quite invisible, and the absence is produced by Iris Hüttegger in addition with the change of the colour negatives into black and white photographs and through sewing coloured and haptically experienceable threads onto them. While these analogously developed pictures are worked on, they preserve an impression similar to brass rubbing of a print of reality – in contrast to the tangible resolution of digital photographs –, but also the information of the pictures is lost, gaps develop. This landscape space gains, through the picture detail and the sewing, also an opening of the image area and a spatial deepening into an intangible, boundless and unimaginable space. Thus, the spectator constantly finds himself/herself by taking on these photographs somewhere in between, where what he/she wants to experience wears off in the unknown and unperceivable, where shadows gloom over the terrain, where landscapes stretch across far from the image area. Where the picture– inseparably linked – makes depth, void, and absence visible.

The landscapes created by Iris Hüttegger resp. the presented segments make locating an area in the sense of a recognisable place often impossible. Also stone formations, deserts, thicket, and plant cover cannot be shown specifically or as unreal-ideally as in a natural-historical diorama. The contrast between those that build up in a lazy, dramatic size and in invisible breaks and stretches in front of the spectator and the tender threads could be harsher. At one time, these threads appear like joyful rabble on a day in spring that knows how to crawl over and grow in these landscapes, that highlights time-lost land; then again, they seem like sprung from a hopeless fighting and desperate anger, leaving traces in these great, diachronic landscapes of man.

Hence, man, invisible in these archaic landscapes, moves as a spectator in this art as a yearning, demanding person, searching for home, barely ever leaving behind traces. With Iris Hüttegger, in the fight between material and form, only the idea, the invisible, the void can win against the appearances of soil. Here, man is at home.

Iris Hutegger **- lull, landscape clothes, and disappointment**

Iris Hutegger was born in Styria in 1964. In the year 1990, she moved to Switzerland, and thereupon lived in the Engadin and in Luzern; she currently lives and works in Basel. In Switzerland, the encounter with the mountains, which Iris Hutegger detects by hiking, looking, and taking photographs, is inevitable. She experiences joyful moments and fearful situations, but also undergoes the use of natural landscape – or what we understand by that – as sports venue to advertising formula.

Hence, Iris Hutegger poses the questions: "How long is the distance to what we see? Which feelings does man convey to landscape and nature – yearning, homesickness, illusion?" Various landscapes and mountain forms are really worked out as selected targets and inspire her. After diverse courses at the HGK (university for design and art) in Zurich and Luzern, she attended the university for design and art in Basel. Since 2004, she has been appearing before the public with various artistic projects.

Since 2007, her works that are of a surprising simplicity as well as of a magical lightness have gained international knowledge. Thus, she had an exhibition during a long-term sojourn in Tucson/Arizona in 2007 and made the video *Potatoes are sold in sacks for the weblog of the documenta 2007*. In 2009, she maintained a studio in Graz, Styria, by the federal provincial government of Styria, and during her time at the studio Rondo in Graz, she showed again an interference by taking on an existent space formation. Since October 2009, she presented cycles of three-dimensional photographs in the Badische Kunstforum in Ebringen, in the gallery Kontemporär in Graz and the Fabrikkultur Hegenheim.

The documentation *Please, take a seat*. was developed for the exhibition of the same title by Iris Hutegger in spitzbart_FORUMTREPPE in Oberasbach.

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