

OVERGADEN.

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Tove Storch talks about her sculptures that are both fragile and sensual, but at the same time minimal and hardcore.

INTERVIEW

By Helle Brøns, Overgaden

Helle Brøns Every exhibition has a particular atmosphere. What frame of mind would correspond to your exhibition at Overgaden?

Tove Storch Being attentive and careful, I guess. You probably shouldn't expect an answer to any kind of concrete or specific question, but you may find an answer to something else, perhaps...

HB In the exhibition, you present six sculptures in different tints of grey and in varying sizes UT (metal object I-VI). At first sight, they look like metal boxes, but on closer inspection you realize that they consist of thin membranes of silk stretched out on wooden frames. At the ends of the boxes the remaining silk fabric hangs loose touching the floor. What were your thoughts in relation to these works?

TS The works came into being in continuation of thoughts that have recurred in several of my earlier works, where I have considered the sculpture as a kind of sprawled arrangement of two elements: A load-bearing construction and something placed on or around it. The aim is to create a spatial occurrence with simple means. I contrast my own attempt to think sculpture differently with a very naïve image of what sculpture is traditionally considered to be - something that is shaped out of some solid lump on the basis of an idea, that is. To me, these boxes concern the "intention" and the "attempt" to create objects as such. They are attempts to mime a classic minimal object, though not directly, but by detours so as to lend the work fragility and immediacy.

HB Well, they do recall Donald Judd's minimalist sculptures from the 1960s that often consist of a number of identical, industrially produced boxes. For him, the point was to empty the sculpture of intrinsic meaning - what you see is what you get. However, like you said, your boxes take a detour. Because, really, they are not at all what they claim to be. They are at once much more and something else than you think at first sight. And yet they are so infinitely simple. The square box is one of the simplest basic forms, and your boxes remain completely mute and speechless in all their simplicity. They seem almost meaningless or "dumb". What is it about this simple form that is so fascinating?

TS Well, for one thing, due to a number of geometrical and practical circumstances it is a lot easier to make a rectangular than a lopsided quadrangle. Also, it is as if it involves a more complicated decision to make an intricate form since you then begin to design things yourself and so naturally focus on this. But it also depends, of course, on

the material you work with. If you work with wood, it is quite obvious to make a cube, whereas if you work with stone making a cube is a highly conceptual decision. I usually end up with the simple forms, because the works are not only independent objects, but also very much a sort of spatial examples. Something representative.

HB I would like to dwell a little on what you just said about "spatial examples". Several of your earlier works take their cue from an imaginary form in a virtual space which you then proceed to bring into the real world. For example, you have turned computer generated objects into physical sculptures - often in a deliberately helpless and far too literal manner that makes the objects quite comical in their encounter with gravity, with awkward materials, the handmade and other very real phenomena. Is there an element of this at work in this exhibition?

TS Yes, in a way, I think there is. Personally, I get the feeling that these boxes are something out of this world. Even if their construction is incredibly simple and you can actually see that they are hand-sewn, there is something almost supernatural about them. They also look like very simple renderings - computer-made objects - and maybe they share some of their characteristics, the hollowness and the inflated spatiality...

HB For this exhibition paper you have produced two pictures that are almost a work of art in themselves. Can you tell me about them?

TS My exhibition has no title, and in general I find it easier and more fun to pin down the theme of an exhibition using images rather than words. Therefore, the pictures - or the work of art, if you wish - on this sheet almost serve as a title for the exhibition. The images show an object, that I found in the roadside. I photographed the front and back of it, in an attempt to make a spatial reproduction of it on a flat sheet of paper. Thus the whole paper becomes an object rather than just a surface carrying information.

HB So the images are made specifically for this exhibition paper. How do the works in the exhibition relate to the space they are shown in?

TS Above all, I have felt like presenting the room as such, to focus on how elegant it actually is. You have to relate to the room with care and attention, otherwise the sculptures will break, and I think this visual carefulness influences the intensity with which you perceive the room as such. I have also felt like relating the sculptures to the main characteristic of the room: the black and white chequered floor. If you mix black and white, everything becomes grey and disappears - in

theory, at least. The other work included in the exhibition *UT* (neutralizing floor) is based on this assumption: It is a negative image of the floor projected back onto the floor. The idea is to somehow neutralize this one little quadrangle and render it invisible or turn it into non-existent area... But this is just something that you can elaborate in your mind, if you feel like it. Really, it is just a pale projection that doesn't quite fit in with the pattern of the floor.

HB The boxes as well as the projection, then, play with the idea of

mixing and cancelling out the black and white check patterns in the floor. But, like you said, theory is one thing, reality something else. When we spoke in your studio, you said that these boxes also have to do with invisibility?

TS Yes, that is true. I'm not quite clear on it myself, but it may have to do with things that are there and not there at the same time. I mean, the boxes somehow pretend to be solid, hard and quite powerful, but in reality they are light as feather and nothing but thin shells. Even though they are really present, they

are also a kind of illusion, but not the way we normally tend to think of illusions.

HB Tell me more about the role of the materials. Although the boxes are formally stringent and simple, the silk fabric and the dimensions of the boxes also make you think of air mattresses and silk sheets. There is something very delicate about them...

TS Yes.. what you said about silk as a material is certainly quite important. It is important that it is a refined, classic material and that



Tove Storch, *UT* (front), 2008

it is vulnerable. It is also important that the material is used in an unusual way. Normally, a sculpture is not intended to be so fragile. You sort of assume that a plane surface is a plane surface where you can place something, because it won't cave in. Normally, fabric is cut out so as to make the perfect form visible externally and you hide all the solutions on the inside, cutting away all superfluous fabric. Fabric is usually soft and flexible. Here, however, the fabric membrane is tight and looks hard.

And then there is something I really like about the dimensions. The boxes are at once spatial forms and surfaces on the floor. It is true that they are a kind of mattresses. I think you get a very intimate relation to them when they lie there so vulnerable on the floor. Maybe you stand there with mud on your boots or something, and you just know that they will burst, if you try to lie down on them. The very dimensions of the boxes are determined by the length and width of the fabric. All the boxes are covered with five

meters of fabric, and when the box is made taller, it automatically becomes shorter etc.

HB *They could be considered sculpture covers, then, stretched out in different shapes. They are quite tight in the upholstery where they have a frame to support them, but they loose their shapes when the material is not held up... I would like to hear a little more about how these works have come into being. Is there a clearly defined problem in relation to the objects, or is it rather a wordless, spatial process?*

TS I'm not guided by a specific problem in my work. And yet I'm always looking for something that fits as an answer to a number of questions or criteria that I have set up for myself - although they are not formulated concretely.

In relation to these specific works, I have looked in my sketchbook which is filled with drawings of light pieces of cloth that are about to fly away, was it not for some massive lumps of lead that hold them down. There is also a stretched out piece

of cloth weighed down by something heavy. A lot of thoughts that aren't really used for anything, except leading to a new thought which then proves to make a whole lot of sense in relation to what I was looking for.

HB *Do you think you could narrow down what it is you are looking for? You said that you take off from a simplified notion of the nature of sculpture which you then proceed to challenge by way of your works... Is this the drift of your questions?*

TS If I were to try to describe the way I work a little closer, I would say that I relate to historical and sculptural norms, to the history of sculpture, to the possibilities of and the expectations to a sculpture. At the same time, I use my own spatial experiences - virtual as well as real - to be able to pose new or warped questions.

Like most other artists, I think I often work from a feeling that would probably sound completely stupid if it was articulated, a feeling that

is very hard to define accurately. It may lose its magic, if it is exposed. Some times I prefer to let it remain uncertain, because I don't think art is a dialogue that rests on a linguistic basis. Art is something else and something more, like you said before.

HB *All your possessions are stacked together in a corner of your studio, waiting to be shipped to Vienna where you are going to live after this exhibition. It is a very, very small pile of packing boxes, a chest of drawers, a bookcase and a mattress (the latter positioned right next to the boxes thereby making them even more mattress-like). And you even hope to be able to get rid of some of this and maybe leave the bookcase behind. I can't help but wonder if this process of minimizing, limiting and cutting down to essentials somehow corresponds to your works. This mix of sensitive fragility and tightly controlled simplicity that characterizes your works, is this something you recognize from your own life?*

TS I don't think I recognize my home in my works - the only reason why I have so few possessions is that I constantly move... But I'm very concerned with what I have and how my things are placed! It may seem random to others, but to me, it is a highly sensitive and personal process to decorate the rooms I live in. I think most people have some rituals they go through when they arrange their private spheres, and I think these general, spatial sensations are really interesting in relation to sculpture.

HB *Your work is very formal, and it tends to be quite introspective focusing on sculpture itself. The*

exhibition at Overgaden is silent and in a way introverted. Generally, there is a tendency in parts of the contemporary art to investigate formal questions as opposed to more content-laden themes. Why do you think that is? Do you sometimes feel like bursting the bubble that separates the works from the surrounding world?

TS I really don't think there is a bubble. As far as I'm concerned, my objects relate quite directly to all already existing objects that we know and use every day. And therefore they say something about being an object in general which is very important, even if it may seem self-evident and trivial. Complicated questions arise when you question the ordinary. You encounter formal questions as soon as you begin to realize an idea, and I think most people have had this experience on some level. So, no, I actually don't feel the need to burst any bubbles.

Of course, my work and most other artists' work take place within a certain interpretative framework, but it is this very framework that makes a lot of absurd things possible. This is what is so fantastic about it, and it is what makes it possible to investigate undefined phenomena. Why is something only considered relevant if it mirrors a recognizable reality? The element of recognition is not always an image or an object in itself. As in my case, for example, recognition can also reside in the sensitive treatment of certain materials. Perhaps it is this sense that constitutes the principal line in this exhibition, and perhaps this is what the exhibition gives you to keep?

The interview was conducted via e-mail in October 2008

CV

Tove Storch (b. 1981) graduated from The Royal Danish Art Academy, Copenhagen in 2007. She has also studied at Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Vienna and Weissensee Kunsthochschule in Berlin. Storch has had solo exhibitions at Massma, Ronneby, 2006; Kirkhoff Gallery, Copenhagen, 2007; Q, The Royal Danish Art Academy, Copenhagen, 2007, and CPH Kunsthal, Krabbesholm Højskole, Skive, 2008. Among other places her works has been shown at Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, 2005; Bell Street Project Space, Vienna, 2006; Museum of Contemporary Art, Roskilde, 2006; The Aarhus Art Building, Århus, 2006 and Croy Nielsen, Berlin, 2008. In addition to her solo exhibition at Overgaden this fall, Storch also participates at *U-TURN Quedrennial of Contemporary Art*, Copenhagen, and the group exhibition *Enter* at Kunsthallen Brandts, Odense. In 2009 she exhibits at Gl. Holtegaard, Holte and Karma International, Zürich. Storch lives and works in Vienna and Copenhagen.

WORK WORK

Thursday 15 January 2009 at 7.30pm Tove Storch's exhibition is closing with a performance, that reflects the exhibition in a new way. The coverband Kimberly&Clark will deliver the sound picture.

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

Friday 6 February 2009 Overgaden presents a solo exhibition by Søren Lose and the exhibition *Interrupted Game* with Amel Ibrahimovic & Slaven Tolj. The last day of the exhibitions is 5 April 2009.

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Translation: Morten Visby

This exhibition folder can be downloaded from www.overgaden.org



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Tove Storch, *UT (back)*, 2008