

unstable thinking

Intermediate states have something unsettling about them. Between dissolution and reinvention, a completely idiosyncratic zone emerges in each case, whose specificity resides precisely in the fact that it cannot be specifically determined. The interest in this confusing and fleeting character as a concept is present and perceptible in all of Nadine Fecht's works. Whether they be small or large drawings, wall-drawings, videos or sound pieces, the works interrelate as a whole within this approach.

The shimmering that some of her large drawings generate through their structures and patterns — by disturbing the gaze in such a way that even the cognitive plane itself is affected, so that the gaze cannot correct itself by thinking — are a direct expression of this interest: the viewer is transported into an interstice of seeing in which instability becomes a constant.

This can be experienced in a particularly pronounced fashion in the work »Radiohorizont« (radio horizon). The large black-and-white structure, applied to paper with dry charcoal, generates an hallucinatory pull that is downright physical, including by virtue of the large format's immense effect. This can go so far as to induce giddiness. But that it is only the first plane. If you let yourself in for looking further, and can stand it, there is a further plane. From the disconcerting chaos of the collapsing visual sense, after a while, a surprising new kind of structure arises: like a kaleidoscope, the splintered grid starts to generate from out of itself ever new forms and patterns. These patterns — which, of course, only take place on the viewer's retina, because the image itself, like all images, is static — can be held onto just as little, but they reproduce in themselves a new kind of order and sense. What is fleeting, what you cannot hold onto because it is in flux, because it exists only in transit between the one and the other as a critical moment of the transition, becomes permanent: the only fixed point is that it cannot be held onto.

There is, of course, something paradoxical in the approach of wanting to think instability so far that it attains a fixed form. There is a tension in which the one is always rubbing against the other, because the one is no longer completely present and the other is not yet fully present. Viewed conversely, however, this tension can be formulated also positively: as multiplicity in which the presence of the one does not exclude the other, but perhaps even allows it to stand beside itself on an equal footing.

Time as a paradoxical phenomenon and transience are parameters of such work as manifested in »Talent«, consisting of a video and a wall-drawing: that in the video it is not only to be seen how the drawing in graphite dust takes on form on the wall, but also, when it is subsequently overpainted, it rubs against the simultaneous presence of the actual wall-drawing that remains standing rigidly and immovably next to the video.

However, it is not the phenomenon of time itself that is thematized here. It is not a matter of representing a process or succession in an abstract form. In this sense, Fecht's art does not reproduce anything at all, but tries to make something new, something unthinkable as a reality. In the case of the work, »Talent«, this is a kind of 'anti-time', or better still, 'meta-time', in which passing and persisting remain standing next to one another to an equal degree, without the tension being dissolved. Time becomes a metaphor for the fleetingness of the mutual conditionality of opposites, for, how could the idea of transience be conceived without the idea of the enduring, and conversely?

Transience and permanence are one of those pairs of opposites that are transferred into a transitional zone in which drawing as a classical medium of fine art and cross-medial, installation work meet in a higher concept. If such works evoke confusion and perhaps provoke even astonishment, this is only because they come up against a kind of thinking that is used to holding onto categories that are summarily decided.

In the exhibition »field recording«¹ Fecht shaped an entire room as an installation where, in each individual work, the same question was posed in a different way. The above-mentioned work, »Radiohorizont«, was integrated into this installation. The idea of the field referred to in the exhibition's title was meant precisely that way: as

force-field of the possible in the interstice of the paradoxical. Held together and guided by a luminous white floor that activated and abstracted the entire room as a unity, each individual sheet had its own effect on the space and across to the other sheets. Opposite »Radiohorizont«, a small framed sheet called »Echo« hung which achieved a very similar optical effect, although with the more subtle means of drawing. Another part of »field recording« were two very large wall-fields of equal size impregnated in the wall with simple linseed oil, thus paintings that were neither in front of nor on the wall, but *in* the wall. On the floor, and to be heard through headphones only in an intermediate position of crouching or bending, was a record player — naked in the midst of cables for electricity and a connection with a small amplifier — on which a record was rotating that Fecht had had produced, and on which there was nothing to be heard apart from 53 tracks of recorded initial grooves of used commercial records: the moments after setting down the needle, before the music begins. The unstable moment in between was materialized in this case acoustically in the crackling of the initial grooves.

Drawing always remains the starting-point or, more precisely, the point of reference for Fecht's works and work groups. In large formats she attains an expressive potential formulated likewise in an interstice, by working the ever-enlarging surfaces nevertheless with the fineness and specificity of paper and drawing-pencil. The tactile qualities of drawing, the 'dryness' of paper and drawing materials such as pencil, graphite dust, carbon paper and ball-point pen, are always present and contrast in their brittleness with the impact of the abstract motifs. The fine lines, structures and surfaces that join to form colossal overall compositions result in a completely idiosyncratic field of tension in which insistence on the smallest detail appears to almost overtax the drawer and the viewer.

Fecht's concept of drawing is extended and, in principle, incorporates everything that can be at all related to the complex of sign and seeing. The typographical correspondence of language in the subtitles of films is an intentionally employed stylistic means in her video work, »close reading«², shown at the Berlin Akademie der Künste. The visual portion of the video consists here exclusively of four superimposed subtitle tracks in four different languages. These subtitle tracks transcribe and translate four different speakers whose mother tongues are all different. These were supposed to spontaneously explain words which have diffused from other languages into one's own — once again an unstable transitional zone that is to be found in the foreign word that has become one's own language. Successively, the video's viewers hear these explanations, reading the subtitles along with them. Within the white subtitle tracks, all the foreign words that have diffused in this way are then highlighted in red: this structure resulting from the words marked in red within the overall text in white, continually fluctuating along with what is spoken, is the 'drawing' within this work. Whereas the speakers become very close in the process of explaining, also through the selection and sequence of the selected concepts (such as angst, guerrilla, burn-out, laissez-faire), the visual transposition of what is spoken transports the entire process onto an abstract, structurally higher and, above all, de-individualized plane.

Language is a completely independent area of reality. The intersubjective connection produced by language through one communicating to the other or the others, always generates an unfocused intermediate zone in which what was originally intended changes. The large drawing, »speaker«, is part of an installation that stages as an interstice what is disconcerting in the supposedly fixed relation between speaker and who is addressed. The drawing hangs on its own in the middle of the wall opposite a wall that has been completely covered with soft black fabric. Viewers stand between the walls, opposite the speaker, and already the size and iconographic non-ambiguity of the drawing makes them into listeners. The drawing's forceful surfaces in their detailed hatching, however, are broken within themselves. They comprehensibly join together adjacent surfaces of sheets still suggesting carbon paper and its pre-produced format. On closer inspection, here, too, the insistence on every small detail becomes visible: as in »Radiohorizont«, the number of individual lines composing the oversized circular areas is increased almost into an absurdity that overtaxes the gaze. The speaker as the subject is not simply identical with itself, and it does not simply carry itself to the outside, but also reflects what is opposite, just as the concise lack of quality of the black wall-face is mirrored in the charcoal-grey, hatched, circular areas. Obviously, no speaking on an equal footing is intended here. The speaker is speaking to many, but even power and impotence are only apparently fixed relations, which always becomes manifest when they jolt into motion.

Instability as 'thought' by Fecht in her works is not a critique of stability or social relations, and it is also not an investigation of the complexity of the real. Just as her works do not depict anything, they also do not simply reflect any concepts. It is rather a completely idiosyncratic view of the world of phenomena that aims to be realized as a

view in the works, the drawings. Seeing here becomes a physical and an intellectual activity to an equal degree; nevertheless, seeing remains in its original sensuous quality. Post-modernity has changed our perception of the world. Reality and concepts of reality have equally come into flux, without it being able to be recognized how, in this situation, firm ground is to be regained. To at least recognize this insecurity as an intellectual reality, in order to reassure oneself, is perhaps one of the strategies that can characterize post-post-modernity or post-conceptual artistic work.

Such an ambivalent view, that wants to reassure itself without being placated, is what gives to the unstable and disconcerting character of Nadine Fecht's works an additional quality of confidence and positive Utopia that is as rare as it is necessary.

Eric Wunder

¹ »field recording«, Fruehsorge Contemporary Drawings, Berlin. 13. Januar - 25. Februar 2012

² »Kultur:Stadt«, Akademie der Künste, Berlin. 14. März - 25. Mai 2013

translation: Dr. Michael Eldred