

Ana Roldán Take Position: Bodies and Plants

Opening: 29.1.2015, 6 pm
30.1.-7.3.2015

With the exhibition "Take Position: Bodies and Plants", annex14 is showing four new groups of works by Ana Roldán, who was born in Mexico in 1977. These works date from 2014/2015 and in them the artist engages with the interactions between nature and culture and with the question of the extent to which positions taken by mind and body mutually affect each other.

The shadow of a flag flutters against a backdrop of grey asphalt. The video recording, almost totally in different grey nuances, is accompanied by the beat of feet dancing to the rhythm of a Mexican folksong. It is this that provides an indicator of where the otherwise universally valid flag outline might be located.

The video was made in the member state of Guerrero in Mexico, i.e. the state where the abduction of 43 students from a teacher training college made headlines in September 2014. The subsequent investigation clearly pointed to involvement of organised crime, the police and politicians, and this subliminally present knowledge is evoked by the video. Whereas a flag is seen necessarily as a symbol of a community of some kind, the empty shadow of a flag makes a mockery of the concept of union and forms a banner of its own for people's feeling of being separated in a splintered society.

Like the video medium, the wall poster is also a political medium: both are capable of promoting the widespread dissemination of political ideas and both are omnipresent in our cities. By placing the posters irregularly on the wall Roldán plays with the different meanings of "position", fanning out the scope of the term, something that also resounds in the exhibition title: Position can be a physical position in three-dimensional space, a body pose or an attitude or mind-set. Roldán playfully addresses a basic problem of philosophy through her bands of words, namely, the question of how one proceeds from a mental to a physical attitude, and what the relationship is between them. In the context of her video work, therefore, the question also arises as to the point at which an inner attitude becomes manifest in a constellation of bodies on the street.

The three sculptures arranged in the room exhibit a strange presence. Covered in fabric they evoke the feeling of being confronted with something living, yet at the same time they are only representations of a human presence. In the bends and curves of the upholstered figures we may well recognise crossed legs or bodies snuggling up to one another, but the supposed peace of the anthropomorphic positions can be destroyed by taking just a few steps: seen from another angle, this humanity gets lost and what the eye sees is simply a strict abstract sculpture. The sculptures thus hover between the organic and the technical, while still preserving an aura of presence that is difficult to fully grasp. This hybrid aspect is underscored by the use of different textiles: while we recognise the fabrics on the one hand as evidently man-made, on the other, we always link them, as a second skin, with a person – and the distinction between nature and culture becomes blurred.

The thirty photographs also reflect Roldán's interest in the opposition between forms that grow naturally and man-made forms. While man often appropriates forms from nature, syntheticizing and abstracting them for the purposes of design and art, Roldán enables the natural form to itself become an image: she brings organic items like coconuts into the photo laboratory where, as if by themselves, they become inscribed in the photographic surface. She thus presents us with indexical impressions of coconuts with which she then forms

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artificial and construed arrangements thereby putting them in the context of abstract painting. As a result of his human activity, the border between organically grown and deliberate production becomes unclear and volatile. This interaction is further underscored by the very medium of the photogram – the only one that enables an object to depict itself.

In the works in "Take Position: Bodies and Plants" Ana Roldán thus addresses themes with which she has been preoccupied for some time, creating a multi-layered exhibition in which not only political events reverberate, but also the philosophical question of the duality of mind and body.

Sarah Wiesendanger