

Elena Bajo «Time is the Form of the Object»

8.5. - 6.6.2015

Opening Thursday 7.5.2015, 6pm

The gallery annex14 is delighted to introduce the Spanish artist Elena Bajo to Switzerland for the first time with a solo exhibition. Born in Spain in 1976, Bajo now lives in Berlin and Los Angeles. Taking a conceptual approach, Elena Bajo focuses on social themes and artistic processes and conditions. Her research-oriented way of thinking and acting leads to an open handling of a wide variety of media, such as performance, film, text, sculpture, installation, painting and also participatory projects and own publications.

The point of departure for the exhibition in Zurich is the work *Power Object 7 Breath of Quaoar*, 2014, a wooden latticed structure stabilised with a number of balloons and propped up against the wall. The work was originally carried out on-site in Santa Monica, California as part of a project while she was an artist lab resident at the 18th Street Arts Center there. It was inspired by the mythology and shamanism of the native inhabitants. Elena Bajo examined their notion that objects, dreams, song and dance have within them a force for change in which she discovered an artistic potential for herself by means of which she analyses fixed structures of the present and reconsiders them afresh. Here, as in many of Elena Bajo's projects, the idea is to give space and visibility to what is absent, invisible. In this specific case, it is the resistant potential that could well accrue to magical thinking in an enlightened society.

The above-mentioned work is typical of the artist insofar as it shows a kind of order that is free of hierarchy. It is no accident that Elena Bajo has coined the term "anarcho-escultura" (anarchist sculptor) for herself. This can be understood in relation both to aesthetic form and content. It also points up her fascination with anarchism, among other things, the exclusion from historiography of the women in that movement. Consequently, cultural history is an important focus of her work. The sources for her artistic projects are mostly artefacts of past cultures which she sources both from analogue and digital archives and from her own fieldwork. Working scientifically and intuitively, she explores traces of cultural history, such as found objects, rituals, everyday items and materials, as bearers of information. In this she is always guided by the question of how looking at the past can clear the way to utopian thinking.

The ready-made and chance are major tools in Elena Bajo's artistic process, while her fundamental interest in concepts of life and the world reveals an in-depth understanding of historical, social, political and economic processes. Out of opposition to a world which today is predominantly determined by economic rules, Elena Bajo's preoccupation with marginalised or forgotten cultural and social phenomena has resulted in a visual idiom that encourages a new way of dealing with concepts like structure and anarchy.

To achieve the latter, an excursion into art-alien areas is sometimes sufficient, as in the installation *Is our Future a thing of the Past?* (2015), which refers to the Big Bang and the cosmological redshift (used in astrophysics as an indicator of distance and indirectly to measure the age of cosmic objects). A more than 15-metre-long silk ribbon runs throughout the gallery space measuring it anew, relating temporality to architectural elements and imbuing the distances and intermediary spaces with rhythm as a dynamic quality of form.

Through her thinking and her artistic practice, Elena Bajo opens up spaces and scenarios in which materials, ideas and shapes enter into new and unexpected relations. Her constant quest for indeterminateness and ambiguity gives rise to an individual poetics of resistance

Elisabeth Gerber

Elena Bajo, (*1976, E), lives and works in Los Angeles and Berlin. Recent solo exhibitions in Stacion Contemporary Art Prishtina, Kosovo; Artium Vitoria-Gasteiz; 18th st Arts Center, Santa Monica, CA; Garcia Galeria, Madrid; D+T Project, Brussels; Platform3, Munich; Jan Van Eyck Academie, Maastricht. Forthcoming Kunsthalle, Sao Paulo; annex14, Zürich.