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Contours Circumscribed

Kati Gausmann's physical drawing processes

When we drop a cloth or an item of clothing while doing our housework, as a rule we pick it up again without paying much attention to exactly how it is arranged on the ground. But we could also be interested, of course, in the particular shape that the fabric produced when it fell down. Then, if we let another item of clothing fall, a different shape will be formed; and if allowed to fall a second time, the same item will create a different arrangement again.

Textiles that fall onto each other build into a heap, whereby the contours of the individual items disappear optically to a large extent. Kati Gausmann has found a way of visualizing these "fall-shapes" that generally only exist temporarily and a way of capturing them in the long term.

In the case of her *haufen*, the items of clothing did not fall onto one another but onto the same spot in succession; the artist fixed the outline in each case by drawing around the form with crayon as it had fallen. In 2011 this happened directly on the floor of the Kunstraum Potsdam, onto which 300 items of clothing fell one after another and were each outlined using pastel chalk. The outlines of other heaps have been marked with pencil on paper, where they result in a similarly dense, in many places overlapping configuration of lines. The concentration that emerges on the floor or on the paper, resembling an entanglement or some form of undergrowth, suggests the two-dimensional or horizontally drawn projection of a three-dimensional or vertically rising heap consisting of the physical objects themselves. In this sense it also constitutes the continuation of earlier works, which comprised actual heaps of clothes, either from direct use (in the case of *altkleidersammlung* (2003) or *freie Auswahl* (2006)) or as arrangements that the artist refers to as *sculptural studies*, such as *falten rollen stapeln haufen* (2000), consisting of 200 removals blankets.

Not only the objects themselves but also their shadows result in contours. In order to be able to follow the pattern of shadows as they altered with the position of the sun over a continuous period of 24 hours, from 2007 to 2010 Kati Gausmann travelled several times to Andenes in Northern Norway, where in summer it stays light around the clock.

In the case of balls or stones laid on the ground, an ensemble of several balls, a globe that was obviously screwed onto a rock a long time ago, or a street light, the regular track of the shadow shapes that the artist has drawn on the ground using white chalk results in a rhythm of densities and empty spaces in the drawing, encircling the position of the objects like a wheel. The patterns of shadow and movement that we find in the works on paper and the ground in *nordlicht* (2007-2010), result in repeatedly fanned out, spiral-like chains, as if the object was seeking to unfold along the traces of its own shadow.

For Kati Gausmann, drawing does not mean reproducing things but bringing the self into a physical relation to objects, spaces and rhythms, and articulating this via the process of drawing. The motion – drawn and physical – around the objects, their circumscription, may also come about in the imaginary sphere. This applies, for example, to the walking around her own body that forms the principle behind *me moved* (2010). Other connections are generated to movements that come about within entirely different radii. In the case of *nordlicht*, for example, with its geographical proximity to the North Pole, this is a relation to the Earth's own movements and its rotation around the sun.

The global aspect enters directly into the pictorial field in the series *drift* (2013). Here, the theme is processes lying far beyond the physical range of the drawing artist and, in temporal terms, outside the possible experience of individual human beings. Nonetheless, as a human being one is a part of these movements, just as one is part of the Earth's rotation, albeit they take place without us noticing or being able to influence them.

drift is based on the shifts in the continents that have come about over the course of millions of years, shifts that no one could observe with his own eyes or document directly. But there are diagrams or world maps, of course, onto which the positions of the continents are drawn as today's scientific research presumes them to have been in specific periods of the world's history. Kati Gausmann has projected 27 such diagrams one after another and recorded them in drawings, image by image, on the same sheet of paper, so that a similar concentration develops from the overlapping of the lines as in the case of the heaps of clothes – only there it was about a process whose spatial and temporal boundaries could be controlled completely by the artist. Ultimately, the series *drift* is also about projecting her own physical reach onto the process of continental drift; this also enters into the image repeatedly, taking different physical forms, so that by using charcoal or ink rougher and softer contours and transitions evolve, like different aggregate states to the thin, separate pencil lines that may be potentially untangled despite their multitude of overlaps.

The significance that the actions of the body and physical substance have for Kati Gausmann is expressed in that she sees herself not as a draftsman but as a sculptor. Like a sculptor, she is concerned with physically setting herself in relation to an object, although she does not always make this object herself. And so her compulsion to physically mark out the contours of forms operates through insistent, linear explorations between clothing lying on the floor and shadow patterns at the Arctic Circle. And it leads her far beyond her own physical boundaries: even as far as the contours of the Earth's continents.

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