

KRISTINA MATOUSCH

En Plein Air

April 8 – May 13, 2016

Vernissage in the presence of the artist Thursday, April 7th, 6 – 8 PM

There is often a post-minimalistic tendency in the artworks of Kristina Matousch. Even when the objects are not so large they hold an overbearing power, as in the time she hung a spinning washing machine from the ceiling with cables. This duality of moderate size and enormous power is often paired with a strong emphasis on the body, such as when she trampled down two tons of clay through the grates of a scaffold, or stuck a tongue through a hole and painted around its edges. Associations hurtle from Nancy Holt to Eve Hesse, to Paul McCarthy and on to Yoko Ono. The work is aesthetic, sticky and powerful.

Perhaps the most effective aspect of her art is that it makes daily life at once palpable and perverted. It is always concerned with everyday situations, banal objects, simple acts – where the relationship between them, and to the body, is magnified. The state of standing before something, whether it is a thing or face to face, is distraught when the holes rather than the form are emphasized. The encounter is a matter of penetration and reflection; and you are pretty much on your own with it. Matousch often allows recognition to be maximal while retaining an absolute sense of unfamiliarity. For example what else could one say about Leak? It is an artwork where you piss into a chute that leads urine above the heads of the audience to let it drip into a metal bucket on a stage. The sound is picked up by microphones and amplified in the room. You have seen it and heard it before, but not like this. Under the surface of her works I sense the everyday life of John Waters and Charles Burroughs: governed by compulsion and unpredictability, everything becomes both innocent and grotesque, antiseptic and scrambling, compassionate and violent.

In Stain, which Matousch is showing here, she has brought tools to the streets of New York and Malmö and painted in situ. Urban plein air painting. She has sought out the boundaries of public places that are not addressed to a citizen but directly aimed at a body that is forbidden to pass. In short, she has tracked down grilles, fences and similar perforated or patterned boundaries. She has painted them and made imprints from them.

It is an unusually complex series. It has a performative aspect to it since the metal square she wants to paint has to be placed on the forbidden side of the border. This is not always easy or safe as some fences are very high or fitted with barbed wire. Then she has to find a colour as close to that of the grate as possible. How well the spray-painting works also depends on the site of the boundary, the amount of time at hand (due to the risk of being discovered), weather conditions, etc. All these aspects leave traces in the painting. Painting as action is the first act of the overall performance. A second act might belong to the category of street-art, namely the painted square that discreetly remains on the boundary itself, executed in a comparable colour (think about Kazimir Malevitch here). Interested individuals can locate them through the titles provided in the gallery: the paintings are all titled Stain followed by the individual GPS-coordinates. The third act is of course the one that takes place up in the exhibition space, where a negative pattern appears against a monochromatic background in the same colour as the original boundary.

I have never come across such a three-way division and trinity in a single artwork before. It is tremendous to stand in front of one of the final act with the other two in mind. Somewhat boundless.

Lars-Erik Hjertström Lappalainen