

A synthetical fabric woven from many threads

Jolanda Wessel, translation Uta Hoffmann, 2023

Man encounters his (natural) environment with an array of complex measuring instruments with which he expects to achieve orientation and control. Filming, writing, speaking, assembling, and installing, Anne Schülke's work moves along the interstices and edges. Her artistic practice consists of aesthetic research that recognizes the world as intangible, immeasurable, and cultivates as with filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha, a "speaking not about, just nearby" that hesitates to grasp being but nevertheless touches upon it lightly. She reflects on the technologies she uses as work-constituting, to look and listen behind the dry models, abstractions, and documents, so that what otherwise remains invisible and mute within the established reality of the "factual world" (Steinweg) becomes visible and gives voice.

In her early videos, which she realized together with Detlef Klepsch, the relationship between organic matter and the camera appears as a confrontation between technology and ecology. Yet the camera and microphone, used as magnifying glass and tactile device, approach the objects of her interest in an intimate way. Aesthetic formalism means including cuts, loops, unusual perspectives, cut-outs, micro shots, and time-lapse techniques, cause insects and plants to appear as alien beings (Phasmes, Entwurf I & 2). In particular water, as the origin of life and as an archaic element with its visual, material, and acoustic properties, can be seen as a predestined subject of her initial works with the moving image (Natur, Objekt, Ich und Gefühl; Sometimes we want to express this; Attempt 3 & 4). The level of sound (Detlef Klepsch), carried by the artist's voice, introduces a poetic language to the technical images (natural motifs), whereby both forms of expression do not mix, but rather run independently in parallel meeting only occasionally.

In addition to "nature-things", cultural artefacts as the condensations of the human/object relationship are the focus of several works. "The biography of the thing has an extraordinary capacity to absorb human material,"¹ writes Sergeij Tretjakov. It "represents, as it were, an assembly line on which the raw material moves"² and which people approach from both sides. The scanning process applied by Anne Schülke and Detlef Klepsch to various objects includes the light imprint of the respective object in the pictures as an indexical one. Combined with the cropping on long black-grounded strips, their presence is intensified in such a way that the two-dimensional image motifs are perceived (again) as bodies. In a paradoxical movement and in analogy to the human body, the dissecting camera view brings the inanimate objects to life, but at the same time also implies their death, since they must first die for their autopsy to occur. Meanwhile, the sound of the accompanying videos reawakens these "still lives" (Mondo Grass; Lime Housing; Gradual).

Anne Schülke works on the human body as a repository and carrier of gender and identity in two very contrasting ways: First, in projects that emerge as collaborations and never show the body alone, but together alongside and in interaction with other bodies (furthest from the edge, furthest inside; STUDIOfriendship; Circle of Looks). Then again wholly isolated as inverted images, ghostly, transparent apparitions, or opaque silhouettes, where the scan has the effect of a cutout, bring the inner life of objects to light. The human body on the other hand appears as a hollowed-out anonymous (White Balance, nothing), serving as a projection surface or metaphor for naked existence.

1 Sergej Tretjakov, *Die Arbeit des Schriftstellers* (The Work of the Writer), Reinbek 1972, p. 83.

2 Cf. *ibid.*

When the spring of 2020 (due to the Corona pandemic) had to take place indoors, a transparent curtain of pink blossoms occasionally in silhouette form billowed softly in the breeze before an open window (Spring inside; Wirf Dich in Schale und Bleib daheim). But the retreat is soon followed by the emergence: Individual objects and works migrate from the screen and exhibition space to billboards in public spaces (Suture; An ein Ende geraten). In some cases, the images return to the places where they were created (Westtangente; Abrupt), where they visualize and reflect the latter in collage-like image montages as spaces of life and movement, and in the meantime add a sense of becoming to them (1976, im Osten Westtangente; Papapeien und Schwäne). The artist herself also appears as a lecturer in both the physical and virtual space (Stutthof; Randerscheinungen; Kunst. System.Relevanz) and thus adds a performative moment to her practice, which is situated at the interface of text/image, writing/filming.

Despite a presence determined by insecurity and a sense of bottomlessness, Anne Schülke's works do not contain any central narratives or direct messages that seek to provide orientation or a meaningful context. Rather, her works provide "answers to questions [...] that do not pre-exist."¹ Through the combination of image, sound, and writing, which mutually overlap, describe, and complement each other, stable forms and concepts that are fixed can be returned to a destabilized state, heightened, and delimited. Even those (supposed) opposites that determine her works at the level of motifs (nature/technology, human/object, inside/outside) are invalidated and hybridized within an approach that traverses materials, dimensions, and technologies.

The detailed documentation of the individual works in image and text, as well as the website and accompanying booklets, participate in this combination of different media formats and artistic practices. Through numerous self-references and cross-references in the form of motivic repetitions and thematic continuations, a coherent body of work grows into being, to which another work can be connected at any point as "part of the process" (Steel Production, Bread, Continuity Error). To speak of an intermedial practice here would counterproductively assert the ontological closure of the various medial phenomena employed. Instead, Anne Schülke's work can be better imagined as a synthetic fabric (zat) woven from many threads, which does not adhere to the respective circumstances and requirements but casts multiform folds.

Der Text darf ohne ausdrückliche Einwilligung der Urheberin nicht verändert werden; jede Nachahmung ist unzulässig. Jede weitere Nutzung durch Dritte bedarf der vorherigen Absprache mit der Autorin Jolanda Wessel.

1 Marcus Steinweg, "Neun Thesen zur Kunst (Nine Theses on Art)," in: Marius Babias (Ed.), Kunst und Philosophie/Art and Philosophy, Köln /Cologne 2012, p. 40.