

Claus Volkenandt Little Vagaries



Art, according to its making, always includes a stroke of luck. The telephone rings, the doorbell chimes, and already the work situation is a different one. The thoughts that form, the words that surface on paper, the sentence that lines itself up, the gesture about to configure, are interrupted, vanish, are altered, transformed, perhaps even enhanced. In any case they have been transported to a new, a next-on situation. A showman's profundity or shrewdness says: a new day, a new opportunity. Art is precisely not only chance, but luck, in so far as it succeeds or resolves on its success. What distinguishes luck from chance is the prospective or retrospective classifiability, naturally the positive classifiability of a stroke of luck, for instance, in a situation or a biography. The difference can be traced in two sentences: 'What a coincidence that I bumped into you' versus 'What luck that I bumped into you.' The stroke of luck pertains to an existing framework: 'What luck that I met up with you, then I don't have to keep trying to

reach you', or it proves to be retrospectively important: 'What luck it was that we met up at the time.' Luck in art means the ability to place a chance coincidence into an aesthetically creative framework, whether this framework is implicit or explicit, intuitive or discursive. Luck (not only) in art is the positive meaningful chance, an open situation in which you find something without have looked for it: a vagary of the material, the colour, their combination. Something arises that is more than chance, but quite different from volition – luck, in fact.

Markus Schwander's works on show here require and play around with this kind of luck. They are odd jobs, little vagaries, which arise between chance and composition. They are three-dimensional capriccios. In art history, a capriccio means, on the one hand, the temperamental, eccentric genesis of a work, on the other, a certain work form: mostly of a small size and an insinuating implementation. The capriccio is full of allusions and opens up whole fields

of references in form and theme. It oversteps and blurs boundaries, breaches rules, brings ambiguities into play and crams art full of reflections. Above all, however, a capriccio works with a twinkle in its eye, not in jest, but jestingly. All forms of joy are allowed – versus the bitter, self-righteous sobriety of art and life. Not least of all, the capriccio is a form that laughs at itself: art at art.

Here the three-dimensional capriccios that laugh at us are painted or partially-painted plaster sculptures. They are cast from the moulds of everyday things that belong traditionally to the inventory of still life painting (vases, fruit).

In their arrangement and their use, say, of bananas, these motifs are infused with irony. The cast forms are then combined into sculptural still lifes, a feature of which are the just as natural as naturalistically imitated parts of plants (the latter purchased by the artist). It is impossible to make out any combinational logic between the casts of vases and the fruit or between the casts and the floral applications. In this respect the works remain temperamental. What sets them off quite vividly is a play on references and reversals: the cast that bursts the origi-

nal form and takes the place of the original; the original that vanishes under the casting materials and does so visibly, becoming thus the medium of the material; the faithful casts of fruit that remain white yet allow the object recognizability; the faithful casts that are coloured naturalistically but nonetheless in comparison to their white colleagues pose another question, namely that of deceptive illusion; the faithful copies in this only imperfect reference to their defamiliarizing colouring, they too ask, laughingly: 'Well? Who are we then?'

An endless point-the-finger game is set in motion: of references and displacements, presumed straight-forwardness and lucid unclarity, of clear questions and unclear answers. Playfully the three-dimensional capriccios pull out all the stops of art and our idea of art: representation and misrepresentation, copy and original, imitation and inventiveness. Tonalities not at all obsolete: jestingly but not in jest, experience is imposed on them. With the realities of art, the question is raised as to the realities of reality. Luckily.

Translated by Jeanne Haunschuld



Capriccio, 2007, Images: Michael Fontana

