

in conversation with annesas appel

by christine van den bergh

Annesas Appel's work is part of a larger art movement that has been greatly on the rise in last ten years. Artists in this movement create presentations that consist of everyday objects taken out of context, rearranged in the artist's own manner, archived, and placed in a new system with a new and different hierarchy. These artists explore, experiment and question existing meanings. They investigate how the environment is experienced and how it is viewed from any perspective. I met Annesas Appel [Amsterdam, 1978] in 2007 via Johan Deumens. Her methodology intrigued me. Appel's work focuses on the experience of the world around us. With a poetic starting point such as 'measuring the immeasurable' she seeks and analyzes the principles and structures that lie behind the things that people encounter in their surroundings. She tries to chart the world around us by an artistic strategy of archiving, inventory making and mapping. Thus she explores a new, non-judgmental way of looking, the aim of which is to astonish and amaze. The attention to detail and what results from this is always exciting. In her exhibition *Metamorphosis* at BRADWOLFF PROJECTS she presents works that are the outcome of a creative process where Appel converted a series of numbers into a logical system and then 'translated' this into sound and image. It is a total installation that challenges the spectator to experience it and to allow their thoughts to run freely.

You systematically map objects from your daily life in your direct environment, such as utensils, maps, a laptop, a cabinet with books and clothes. What fundamental questions do you ask yourself about the role of these objects in relation to the mental perception of them?

Annesas Appel

I respond very visually to the things around me. I observe, follow and analyze the visual form of the selected object and then try to approach it from a different angle. The world we live in is one of abundance in which we are often inattentive to the stuff around us. This is why I try in my work to focus completely on one object so I can be entirely absorbed by it. The project Notebook is a good example of how an object can make a world in itself. By first dissecting the laptop and to see all the parts separately and to then draw them, the object becomes separated from its function and the focus is on the abstraction of forms.

Where does your fascination come from to dismantle everyday objects in your direct environment and to re-arrange them according to self-discovered and self-made systems?

I'm a bit of a stay at home person and find the world quite overwhelming. Things that literally stand close to me arouse my interest and by focusing on an object I can let go of the rest of the world. Then I'm completely sucked into that topic and I go on a kind of visual voyage of discovery.

You have named your working process itself, a physical way of analysis. Can you tell us more about this?

Because my computer is my instrument to visualize my concepts, I find it pleasant to study the objects through my hands, by really touching them. I tilt, open, scan and dismantle. Objects are to be loosened and separated from what gives them meaning. By this method, it becomes clear that things in their abstracted form evoke visual similarities on both micro- and macro level, such as the abstraction of the structures of print boards of a laptop reminds me of urban design or an Arabic script. I realize that they are all constructions. All my works are very labour intensive. This has to do with the intensity of my analysis, but also with the meticulous labour of love required in the execution. Every detail has my attention. When I work on books I spend much time on the choice of paper and the binding methods, because each element counts, and has an influence on the totality of a project. If one sheet was missing, the work would be incomplete.

Does this resemble the radical method of German conceptual artist Hanne Darboven [1941- 2009] who in her own work tried to eliminate chaos by her systematic drawings?

Absolutely. Discipline is very important in my work because the subject is often so universal. With the project View on the World Map I have worked out a particular system for all countries. After having done the first twenty countries the repetition was tangible to me. Then it is a matter of consistently going through the remainder in a logical fashion and endlessly repeating the same action. For me it works only when the system is complete. Otherwise where do you draw the line? Why should one country be allowed and not the other? Working within a tight system provides clarity and an overview: There is no doubt about what method you should apply. To reach the correct and appropriate system is the most challenging part of the study. I continue to make small adjustments until I arrive at the right system. The system should logically result from the information within the objects themselves. The original idea is open to many possibilities, but gradually more and more options fall away and your gaze will become focused. I have a certain freedom in the making of the system, but then I stick to the rules of that system. This way of working brings a meditative quality to the action that creates an inner peace.

Why did you choose existing abstract entities as your starting point for your project *Metamorphosis* at BRADWOLFF PROJECTS and in particular the number sequence 1 to 9? What impact does this decision have on your working method?

The approach and analysis doesn't differ greatly to my way of working when concrete objects are the starting point. However because these abstract entities are pretty much independent of visual images, it gives me much more freedom to render form in the visual field. Through my project 'Metamorphosis' there is more space because I determine the frame of reference myself. Consequently I work more intuitively and my thoughts are freed. I have the feeling that the ensuing work stands more independently.

In your generation there are more artists doing similar research. What does this say to you about the era we live in?

My generation grew up in a period when the computer and, by extension, the Internet is commonplace. To me this means that all the old forms of organization are no longer usable. The computer has rendered all equal and information is arranged differently. In this way other links arise. From a visual analysis of issues my contemporaries and I discover new arrangements that in their original context had nothing to do with each other. For me it's a way to get a grip on reality.