

difference a bend #3
 Cross! Draw a Distinction!

Anne Gathmann, Katja Pudor

May 5 – June 2, 2012

Opening: Friday, May 4, 2012, 7 p.m.

at Stedefreund, Straßburger Str. 6–8 (courtyard), 10405 Berlin

Part #3 of the exhibition series DIFFERENCE A BEND

In five successive group exhibitions between February and August 2012 we examine the experience of artistic difference and its potentials. What is meant here is the difference between varying artistic positions. The distinction between our own perception and that of others. The simultaneous experience of divergence. The continuous differentiation of our own activity, enabling difference to be used as a productive moment.

The exhibition series “Difference a Bend” creates encounters between Stedefreund artists who have different ways of working, or whose works produce contrasting effects. The current exhibition brings together Katja Pudor and Anne Gathmann. Whereas Pudor’s work is mainly spatially oriented, appropriating space by means of large-scale temporary collages, Gathmann’s installations and photographs are more reserved. She does not so much intervene in the space by adding something to it; rather, she makes calculated adjustments, such as capturing and redirecting light, to liberate our view of existing conditions, thereby effecting minimal shifts in our perception. Whereas Pudor’s interventions betray the movement from which they arise directly in situ, the painstaking deliberations that precede Gathmann’s pieces remain mostly unseen. As a result, though carefully composed, her work still possesses an openness and complexity.

What is unusual at Stedefreund is the fact that the pieces were created specifically for their respective exhibitions, not only in response to the site, but also in relation to the constellation. What happens when, as in this show, two contrasting practices are combined—or crossed—with one another? Do they create a charged situation in which the differences are even more clearly revealed? Or do the differences disappear as a consequence of the artists’ references to each other, because their similarities emerge more distinctly?

On one hand, differences are the expression of a confrontational encounter, a “dissensus,” as Jacques Rancière would say; on the other, processes of negotiation are initiated in the moment of the encounter. Only by coming together and having a conversation about divergent positions and artistic methods can more conscious decisions be made and differences be brought clearly to light. This brings out the paradox of differences in particular, and of differentiation in general: While they are expressions of demarcations and conflicts of opinion, they also always contain moments of being in contact and relating to one another. It is a process of coexistence, in which the point is not to level out differences, but to assent to the other – understood not as a threat, but as a constructive counterpart, in the context of which one’s own work comes more sharply into focus.

The result is two pieces, each occupying the space in its own way – and interpreting the notion of difference differently. Pudor stretches a rope across the room and secures it there with “anchors.” This diagonal, which spans and measures the space, produces a corporeal effect due to its powerful material presence and the way it shapes the viewer’s behavior.

While Pudor’s piece makes a strong statement, Gathmann is more interested in the relativity of difference. True, statements entail perceptual shifts, but these are always merely temporary – until a further statement shifts the parameters or superimposes additional layers of meaning. Differences are therefore not only dependent on the viewer’s position, but also dynamic. After the statement comes a crossing, then a shift, then a new distinction, and so on, and so forth.

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