

Questions to Frenzi Rigling

from Stella Rollig

Stella Rollig: Where does your art begin? With searching or with finding?

Frenzi Rigling: I would say spontaneously with looking. There I see something, it hits me and I think: that's the way the world is! Or something like that: That concerns us humans!

It can be an object or how people do certain things, behave or even a film.

Maybe like this: It starts with a fascination. The impetus for my rabbit drawings came, for example, from the film "La Dentellière" by Claude Corretta. The way Isabelle Huppert wraps a terry towel around her wet hair in the woman's hairdressing salon at the beginning knocked me out; it made universal sense to me.

For many years I tried to find a form that could be the bearer of this feeling. In other words, a character without a story of its own, but one that triggers certain feelings and stories and possibly memories in the viewer.

The appearance of the rabbit is formed by history. My rabbits, however, have no history, they are not studies of nature - but they are rabbits nevertheless and have the attributes of the rabbit such as long ears, long limbs, short tails ... I made the rabbit because I saw the form, because I saw a vision.

What function does time have?

In my work "Diary" I recorded every day over a long period of time which clothes I wore that day. This is a small activity in time, only through constant juxtaposition does this work become powerful and allows time to be experienced in retrospect. The seasons and temperatures can also be read. If this work is to work, it must be done over a longer period of time. In this work, the concept of time was a concern of mine at the beginning in a different way. I wanted to steal time. Through this simplest linear reflection on myself, I wanted to step out of time briefly once a day.

I then noticed that this simple, coded recording enabled many viewers to contribute themselves. That then became a main concern of this work: to move oneself back and forth in time with ease.

As time passes, much becomes visible.

Life changes in time and leaves traces. In my work "Carpet" I sewed together the discarded clothes of my family by hand without changing their shape. This project is not about an aesthetic of textiles or a basic aesthetic intention. I have chosen the clothes only for their emotional content. At the beginning I didn't know in which direction this work would develop. It was only with time and the reactions of the public that the development was consolidated.

Is art an integral part of the practice of life or is it a way out?

In recent years I have made art off the market and without many exhibitions. I have developed a matter-of-course approach to art. The craftsmanship in my artistic projects is similar to the work I have to do in my everyday family life. I am not looking for a way out of my everyday life, but neither do I have the ambition to increase my everyday life through art.

Is a work of art an object or a space? How many dimensions does it have?

Well, with the work of art, that's one thing. I studied painting in the classical way, but I soon saw that this medium does not really satisfy me. Art as an object had little meaning for me. Of course, there are always objects that need space, but I never knew how to deal with them. And I have developed a great carelessness, even contempt for my so-called results. I was really happy when the works somehow dissolved.

To develop a method of how an attitude becomes visible without having a defined end product, that interests me. The dimensions develop from the respective question.

Do materials have to be organic to fascinate you?

No. I choose the material so that it reinforces the message of the work. So it can be red rubber mats - but also dead insects, fur, felt etc. Basically, I like to work with materials that appeal to many people in our culture and thus awaken memories in them. Be it because they were often visible or present in their lives or have a certain meaning in our way of life. Materials with which many people have an emotional relationship or which affect them emotionally, for whatever reason. e.g. collecting shells or pressing plants: These are activities that thousands of people do - why?

These activities have something very touching, or if not, they awaken memories of earlier times, of certain people, in many of us. So general and at the same time so private - I find this work has something very lovable. It is an activity that people do, many of them, when they want to do something positive, when they are in a positive mood, when they want to record positive lifetimes. I wanted to intensify this oscillation between private and general by presenting the pressed plants on newspaper.

When I now see the pressed plants on newspaper cuttings, I feel embarrassed.

When collecting shells etc. the topic of order is added: How to store, how to present? I can't just put them between two newspapers - sooner or later such "souvenirs" are thrown away - at the same time painful and liberating.

I have been dealing with the subject of "dowry" for a long time, so that what someone takes with them when they go abroad, leave home. The place where the family is, the youth was ...

Of course I think of myself, who has moved out, and I am looking for a form and perhaps also for a material that triggers the so-called consternation and emotion, that allows a great closeness or perhaps simply does not leave me cold.

I didn't search, I just noticed my washcloths one day, saw that some of them still wear my grandmothers' name tags ...

That's where I sewed up those rags. And sewed on them this strangely kitschy but touching poem by Hermann Hesse.

Does everything have an end or does nothing fade?

As a child I was always passionately interested in fairy tales. I felt that in these stories everything has an end and yet nothing fades. And that corresponded with my attitude to life.

I would have liked to have grown up in a culture where more rituals and art were part of everyday life and where the realm of the mystical was not only covered by the church. That always bored me very much.

In my works "Knot" and "Socks" I touch this area. In "Knot" I knot clothes so that neither beginning nor end is visible. The objects are given something absurdly meaningless, removed from their everyday purpose. It is like Dada, a combination of chance and myth.

And the "Socks" are about the transience of the material and, of course, the recapture of an enthusiasm for nature. What's also interesting about working with the socks is that in the middle of the process I didn't yet know how it would develop, when it would end and also what to do with the results and how to present them.

Are there people you are not interested in?

Oh sure, many - but I can't think of any.

Which work of art can't you get enough of?

I am a gusher and passionate art viewer - moving and looking freely is what I like to do.

In Switzerland, where I grew up, we unfortunately don't have such lavish temples of art as here in Vienna. Sure, there are many wonderful places with selected wonderful art. I especially like to remember visits to the Römerholz, a private museum near Winterthur, where three of my favourite works hang: two works by Gerard David - a Crucifixion and a Lamentation - and a sculpture by Maillol. In the Kunsthaus Zürich there are the olive stones by Beuys and then there are the white Metamorphoses reliefs by Hans Arp, which appear somewhere from time to time.

In Vienna there is the "Pelzchen" by Rubens ...

A sentence by Balthasar Gracian seems to me to be a maxim of your art: "Do the easy as if it were heavy and the heavy as if it were light. Agreed?"

Oh, yes, I like that very much. Recently I came across an article about the American writer Richard Ford, which quotes a sentence of his that I liked very much: "I throw things in the air and then I see where they land."

This quote immediately reminded me of my work and confirmed my actions.

Which part of the newspaper do you read first?

I usually read about the weather first. About the current weather, the forecast for the next few days or what the temperature is like in other parts of the world.

I also like to talk to strangers about the weather, so I can learn a lot in a relaxed way without having any meaning as a person.