

## Growing space taking movement

Hundreds of gray-white vessels, each about 10 cm high, are spread on the gray floor of the exhibition hall. The delicate, handmade, paper objects occupy the room unnoticed as they blend in with the floor. They gain mass by grouping themselves, giving the idea that they will completely dominate all available space on the floor. The installation is titled *Tempora mutantur*. “The Times are changing- and we are changing with it” is a quote from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This is the context of Anna Handick's work, which is premised on optimism for potential change. Her installations and drawings are often inspired by nature; imitating the metamorphosis of plants, mushrooms, nests and seed coats. The artworks are based on strategies of expansion and occupation, life-saving adaptation, and the occupation of niche spaces, similar to those found in nature.

Anna Handick chooses her materials based on their natural colors and irregular surfaces. At first glance these materials seem natural, but could very well be manufactured like hemp rope, papermaché, latex, plaster, wire or tape. There is always a moment of play between the natural and artistic products. It seems as if the plants would grow out of the wall (*days to come*, 2012) or the mushrooms would naturally grow from the ground (*o. T. (Schleimpilze); Wildwuchs*, both 2011) but together with the context of the exhibition, the nylon sock and the tape express the origins of the material and the way it is made.

Anna Handick does not create a negative or opposing element between nature and civilization, instead, her works show aspects of natural resistance against prevailing rigid conditions, and actions that can be applied to human behavior. Power of oppressed and neglected forms of life are a continuous growing process, though it is a slow and quiet processes, it continuously grows occupying space.

The small bulbous hollow objects of the installation *Insulae* (crocheted hemp string, 2010), form small groups which spread throughout the floor surface. Their openings peek into different directions, therefore, acting curious and receptive. They also expand, and refer to, the potential that small collective structures have to occupy alien premises and make them appear to be their own.

The groups of containers do not only expand, but can also be arranged differently to form new relationships with the space and each other. In this way the installations show that a new relationship occurs between the space, object and the audience. *Wildwuchs* (2011) makes it clear. The work consists of several peaks of loose wire bundles reaching up to 150 cm. Each individual peak is wrapped with tape and painted. All wire stems close the top in small

mushroom-shaped caps as they run together and meet at a common point on the ground. Because they are bent at, approximately, 90 degrees, the wire groupings have certain stability without sacrificing flexibility. They react with a slight tremor to movements in the vicinity, which eliminates the boundaries between the audience's space and that of the artwork and allows the two to interact with each other.

The same phenomenon can be observed in Anna Handick's largest installation, *Kolonie* (crocheted hemp cord, 2009). It consists of numerous pear-shaped objects, which hang from the ceiling and can be up to several meters long- depending on the height of the room. The irregularly rounded nests measure about one meter at their widest point. They become smaller then ending in a narrow stem which turns more flat spread at the end for mounting. Their size, smell and their gentle rocking make the audience aware of their presence in the room. They also send out a kind invitation as well: the hanging bellied form of the nests developed by Anna Handick while observing the behaviour of the weaver bird. A bird, which builds their breeding grounds in colonies high up in tree crowns to protect itself and offspring from predators. In contrast to the natural nests, a tube comes out of the crocheted ones, which provides effortless access to invaders. The multiplicity of objects in installations, and the reaching out in the room, are key principles of Anna Handick's artistic practice. On one hand, they communicate in a particular way with the viewer, and on the other hand they are related to expansive processes in nature.

Some artworks are inspired by plants or animals. For example, *Salvinia* (2012) is related to the fern, *Salvinia natans*, which adapted to its environment optimally. By occupying niches, the organisms are able to defy their rivals and contenders and ensure their survival and their ability to multiply without hindrances. The bright green-white contrast and the strong increase alienate the wide-open leaves and the branched root system. In all her works, which date back to a natural role model, a shift takes place, often, through enlargement but also by the choice of materials. For example *Salvinia* consists of latex along with other materials like foam and nylon. As those types of plastics, she previously used the package string or tape for *Kolonie*, *Insulae* und *Wildwuchs* to connect the installation semantically with industrial production and at the same time with the factory space, in which *Wildwuchs* was exhibited for the first time. The plants, nest or mushroom form create a connection to the (an arch) to a natural exterior. The out of the wall coming installation *days to come* (2012) is spread with a thin layer of latex. The reddish streaks reinforce the idea of skin and body, which is already created with the skin-colored tights. The carnivorous pitcher plant waits for vital food and lures it into her throat, where it becomes her victim through decomposition. Because of its

constituent materials, the installation combines aspects of aggression and passivity, patience and cunning, seduction and sensual – a collection with a sexual connotation.

A feel of the elastic surface reveals the importance of touch for Anna Handick's sculptural works. Even the drawings, because of the selected substrates, create a sculpture-like appearance. The materiality of the particular rough or smooth, absorbent or thin, undulating papers, or the use of glass as a picture ground, give them a tangible, spatial dimension. Her works literally testify about her hands. The irregularities and individual differences, because of their crafting origins, make the objects look grown.

Most of her drawings pursue the principle of increasing reduced motives. This is also what makes and characterizes the installations. Instead of drawing contours, Anna Handick lets short set dashes grow to small individual forms. Line by line, they are first a loose collection, and then they form an overall shape together, such as flat clusters, islands, shoals, forests and cities. The series *Lost Cities* (2011, ink on paper) structures of archaeological maps of the Mayan city of Tikal in Guatemala, is adapted in this approach. The ink symbolically indicates the outlines of buildings; in the spaces, niches and paths it opens up and, therefore, gives the possibility for mazes of networks to evolve. The cartography of fictional places reveals that scientific representations can never keep their required objectivity. Maps try to synthesise natural conditions; and what they do show is only a chosen selection, which, at the same time, omits and excludes the non-selected. Anna Handick's works often refer to the non-selected component in mapping nature. The drawings make one think of past cultures that are long gone, or are progressively disappearing. Plants and animals move further together, penetrate the gaps and niches, subvert existing structures, and retake their habitat. The remains of a defunct civilization reconnect and combine with a newly emerging, previously repressed wild. In the overgrowth itself, the equivalence between culture and nature is set.

In Anna Handick's work, nature and culture are not considered opposites. The materials combine the two areas; its additive manufacturing process is similar to the formation and growth of organisms. They integrate formations and strategies, which organisms use to fight for survival in nature, to keep their place, and expand. In a rhizomatic way, the motives of Anna Handick's work spread out, overcome, and undermine the situation. They grow into structures, and conquer the room with slow processes and vital activity. Anna Handick's work negotiates space in several ways: First by the use of space through extending it as can be seen in *Kolonie* or in a multitude of small-scale installations; Secondly as a field of exploration and expansion. And as a third dimension, it connects the place with confrontation, in which context the observer connects to, and meets, art. All this tries to communicate the principles

of how to regain power in discreet and effective action. The dimension of the sprawling installations and drawings are directed against a collection of subversive movements. The potential and the dynamics of change lie in the occupation of niches and, unobtrusively, in the progressive spreading. The room for growth and to change is vast.