1989 The Conference of Nature's Delegates

Silver gelatin prints mounted on medium-density masonite front and back, varnished, on steel stands, 50 x 60 x 170 cm





INSTALLATION VIEW at CAMERA AUSTRIA, Forum Stadtpark, Graz, Dezember 1993 | Picture by Seiichi Furuy

The entire history of recent photography has little bearing on this: Whenever I look at photographic works, alienated as they might be, all I see are snapshots of reality, nothing artificial, that is, since the raw material, the moment when the finger pressed the release, appears as proof of the real existence of what I see on the photograph. And I believe what I see. That naive faith can neither be shaken by smart computers nor by skillful manual montage. After all, if it was not that way, it could well have been that way, or that which is newly combined here is, in the end, nothing more than a matrix of reality. Anything else is interpretation and has little to do with said raw material.

In that sense, this work by Eva Maria Ocherbauer is very traditional. It is, first of all, limited to a documentary recording of states. She kept various vegetables over months and years and with every new day, they changed their consistence and their appearance. In a moment she regarded as particularly worth recording, she pressed the shutter. The results is a collection of ludicrous monsters, happy gnomes, moist and lascivious wobbly masses or frayed cavities. Greatly enlarged, cut out and balanced on thin stalks, they seem to be so far remote from what they really are, vegetables, but the fact that these are photographic images is proof enough. What we see are by no means the products of a flowering imagination or artificial fairytale creatures but segments of normal life, of a long sequence of natural transformations. Such transformations produce wondrous things: The gradually drying-up pastinaca "Eugenie" squirms and penetrates itself, and where it was a cut, a perplex face appears. Preparing for a Rumpelstiltskin dance, "Hervé" the fennel seems to grow devil's horns subsequent to dehydra-

tion, while his sister "Salome" keeps up her countenance, bending backwards with dignity and offering her hand to be kissed by whoever may come along. "Ambra" the carrot starts a daring camouflage maneuvre, making believe she is a sperm on the way to fertilisation. "Solange" the apple core is gradually getting ready to begin his new life as the commander of an army of parrots. "Minuti" the tomato has abandoned all decency and gives free reign to her lecherousness. "Siegfried" becomes a grumpy oister, "Cosmo" a boxing glove with flowers of reconciliation sprouting from it, while "Tristan" promises new eruptions - he only pauses for breath.

Eva Maria Ocherbauer's works are documentary of the transformations of everything alive. Nothing dies, everything merely changes its material state and, along with it, perhaps its nature, its very soul. Everything seems to be subjected to an unforeseeable but inescapable process. Whatever science attempts to prove with its big bang theory is commented by quoting common, everyday phenomena; things that may be small or great but are certainly strange and unfold their magic, paying little notice to matters of greater importance. In order to communicate this in artistic terms, she often needs to leave the conventional rectangular or square photo formats. Our habits of seeing are too deeply embedded as to be able to recognize the "otherness" of things. Thus Eva Maria Ocherbauer's photographic objects develop a life of their own; they become the subjects of mutations and semantic shifts, placing her work as an artist among the processes that constitute the permanent changes of life.

By Andreas Brandolini, published in CAMERA AUSTRIA Nr. 46 | 1994