

Thea Djordjadze: *To be in an upright position on the feet (studio visit)*

Secession, Vienna

8 September – 1 November 2016

Thea Djordjadze has long been known for sculptures that both explore an inner tension of form – often by juxtaposing geometric, coolly architectural pieces and handcrafted, organic objects – and create an external tension in the environments around them, a kind of universal site-specificity. In *To be in an upright position on the feet (studio visit)*, the Berlin-based artist takes both site-specificity and spatial tension to a seemingly intimate sphere. For this show, she has moved everything in her Berlin studio (everything that wasn't nailed down, at least) into Secession's main space.

On first look the exhibition hall looks like a place holding, well, *stuff*. But Djordjadze's subtle, poetic order quickly asserts itself. Objects are divided by typology into delineated gridlike zones: near the entrance, a row of oversized Plexiglas sheets is loosely attached to the wall. On the floor are wood frames encased in Plexiglas (floorbound vitrines of sorts) containing all kind of objects, somehow logically arranged. One 'vitrine' holds an array of art materials: rulers, chicken wire, sacks of plaster, drills, a box filled with rolls of tape. In another, plaster pieces look like half-finished or rejected works.

Elsewhere are comfy-looking seating arrangements: a coach with throw pillows, a chaise, a black Eames-esque lounge chair and footrest, placed on a low black platform. Plywood sheets line walls or stand freely; work tables stand alone or in groups. Tall potted plants line up against one wall, while along another are rows of canvases: some blank, some painted, most turned toward the wall. Djordjadze's trademark riffs on display structure – plinths, spindly supports – dot the vast space, as do objects that look like finished sculptures. In the room's centre a tall metal structure acts as a corridor to the hall's rear, where studio objects in wood is grouped on the left; metal on the right. On both sides, multiple elements like wood shelving, or a metal kitchen unit are installed directly on the wall, in rhythms at times reminiscent of early minimalists like Judd, or even Charlotte Posenenske. On one rolling trolley nearby is a tiny white model of the Secession space itself, likely preparation for the show, nearly hidden here on the middle shelf.

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Paradoxes abound: this is a studio visit but the artist is missing. As they have been for a century, everyday objects have been transformed into artworks, but here they are on view as everyday objects (... as artworks, and this is of course where things become complex). Djordjadze has put her inner work world into a public space – the makeshift floor 'vitrines' are fascinating windows into artistic production – but there's a sense that nothing *too* private is on view here. Work processes and materials are exposed, yet presented as a meta-exhibition, not as self-disclosure.

For me, other thoughts arose, having to do with longstanding discourses in immaterial production and the historical romanticisation of the genius artist. For the run of the exhibition, Djordjadze's studio in Berlin is completely empty. Is she enjoying this respite from...stuff? Or finding it difficult to think without it? Is she tired? Is this exhibition, besides being the kind of exercise in graphic and spatial experimentation we'd expect from her, also a statement on labour, precarity, or something else? Here, Djordjadze's familiar dance with space appears to go beyond tensions of form and placement and into inquiries both individual and universal; the extra

dialectical layer only adds to the show's appeal.

Kimberly Bradley