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BASTIEN AUBRY / DIMITRI BROQUARD

COUPÉ-DÉCALÉ

In their works, the Swiss artist duo Bastien Aubry (b. 1974, lives in Zürich) and Dimitri Broquard (b. 1969, lives in Zürich) skilfully test the boundaries between art, design and popular culture. The duo flirts with traditional craft, do-it-yourself, the flawed and the deficient as well as the fake as a reaction to the perfection and stylistic confidence of modern design and art. Drawing, collage, photoshop painting, papier mâché and particularly ceramics are their preferred media. With a tongue-in-cheek attitude, Bastien Aubry and Dimitri Broquard roam through the realm of modern and postmodern art, pick up motifs and references and give them a grotesque twist. Everyday objects provide them with starting-points for adaptations and abstractions. For the presentation of their rather small-format objects they develop plinths and shelves as integral components of the work, which refer to famous models in modern and postmodern art or furniture design, but are mostly in fact made from cheap hardware store materials. The charm of their works lies in their caricature of both good and bad taste and playing with the everyday.

The exhibition title Coupé-Décalé (literally 'cut-quirky') hints at such shifts in context and meaning. The title is borrowed from a mischievous music and dance scene that was founded in 2003 in the Paris diaspora by musicians from the Ivory Coast. There it means something like 'being drunk' or 'causing trouble' but also 'heading home', to enjoy an excessive and extravagant lifestyle there with the money earned in wealthy countries. Aubry/Broquard yield nonchalantly and smartly to the fascination of consumer culture.

In the Sidelight Room of Kunsthaus Glarus the artist duo are showing a spatial installation featuring cast-off CD shelves placed on fake stone plinths. The skyline of these design ruins from the everyday décor of the 1980s and 1990s only vaguely recalls the postmodern sheen of their time. Today the shelves are available for a song in junk shops, and even the CD as a recording medium is already a relic of musical history. Aubry/Broquard have invited the jazz musician Philip Schaufelberger to compose a piece of music with the written-off CD stands. The former articles of daily use are thus transformed into musical instruments, and granted an alternative life as a sonorous city. In the same room there are built-in exhibition walls covered with rough outdoor plaster, on which collages of clichéd pictures of all kinds of everyday objects are arranged in display cases. Cutting and pasting is done both the digital and the manual levels – partly with photoshop tools and partly with scissors. In the collages sculptural shapes merge with 3D painting and flat drawing on stout paper into hybrid abstract compositions between high and low. The duo finds their inspiration for these pictures along the way in everyday life, in Art Brut, in Primitivism, modern art and Pop Art, in ruins and decaying objects as well as in illusions such as trompe-l'oeil. Radical juxtapositions are produced not only in the exhibition space but also in the collages: different materials rub up against one another, the traditional collides with the contemporary, the attributions of inside and outside, the real and the simulated slip away.

In the top-lit room perspectives are also shifted and clear attributions are removed. Plain plywood sheets suddenly change from picture supports to autonomous paintings, three-dimensional sculptures and even exhibition architecture and stage sets. The ceramic objects that the artists have produced along with the ceramicist Eric Rihs from the Jura are mounted in a loose, abstract arrangement on the roughly plastered sheets of plywood. They are clearly handmade, and alter between clumsy abstract forms and bits and pieces recalling everyday objects. They too work on several different levels: as autonomous objects and as abstract (painted) compositions on their picture supports, the plastered plywood walls. Object and display merge into a larger spatial composition. The walls stand at an angle to one another in the exhibition space and are connected with wilfully manipulated iron rods to produce an abstract and also rather clumsy spatial setting between failed exhibition architecture and an installation-like Gesamtkunstwerk. Here a deviation from the standard form, the poetry of chance and failure are the intention and deliberate tongue-in-cheek reaction to the standardisation and perfection of modern design. At the same time the compositions on the walls recall climbing walls in amusement parks, thus constituting an ironic dig at leisure culture in which abstract art often makes a fleeting and folksy appearance.

Sabine Rusterholz, curator

