



Double flowers: on the work of Keto Logua

by Céline Mathieu

Originally from Tbilisi and now in Berlin, Keto Logua takes botany, petals and sexes to speak of multiplicity, ambiguity, and subjectivity.

Things we don't have a name for

Keto Logua (b. 1988) uses words like *botanical* and *floral* and speaks of *the world of roses*. Her vocabulary opens a domain. Different flower species have X petals and X sexual organs. "The wild rose has five petals," she explains, "over time it became the modern rose of endless petals. The organs of the flower slowly disappear, as the organs become petals themselves." The titles of the sculptures and paintings in the exhibition Double Flowers at LC Queisser in Tbilisi do indeed sum up the pieces well. *Cross Section* and *Natural History* repeat over different works in the same show. "Similarity doesn't exclude importance; variation motors diversity," says the artist.



Keto Logua, *Natural History I (detail)*, 2020. Courtesy of the artist and LC Queisser.

Wood, tin, steel, blocks of concrete, aluminium

The artist refers to working as *a search* rather than research. "I wanted to explore how we make a selection of natural objects, art objects and technologies of production/reproduction. Roses became part of it." It is usually through reading that she encounters concepts to explore, before looking for what she calls a *material translation*. This formulation nicely points out how she uses existing models (3D or scientific drawings), which she prints, pours or paints. But all stems from intersecting languages and depictions; mutants, like the models in her exhibition. The latter combine analogue and digital modes of production in which the patterns and patinas of the natural and the rigid converge.

A stegosaurus back bone that she found online on a 3D digital media repository is out of poured metal and operates as the centrepiece of the exhibition. It looks smooth and cold, real and fantastical. It sits on top of grainy concrete blocks. The building blocks have 3 oval shapes curved out of them. "This is the Soviet model", she

explains. She found them left in piles in the streets around the exhibition space, which is located where the artist grew up in Georgia. "This type, or model of stone, is now replaced by European standards." She says it with a little smile, suggesting the absurdity of standardisation. Why is one model better than another, two square holes rather than three oval ones? The artist asked a friend architect, the latter replied hesitantly, and speculated.

Keto Logua, *Cross section. Semi Double Rose II*, 2020. Wood, tin, steel. Courtesy of the artist and LC Queisser.

A or B

Interestingly, when collaborating with different scientists, it became apparent that both the arts and science had certain expectations from each other's fields. Keto Logua expected real answers, whereas the scientists wondered why she wouldn't just be interested in the poetry of the studied subject. According to the artist, the way we paraphrase does multiply in our understanding and our projected desires.

The way in which the graphics are painted stems from a botanical technique for schematically organising floral information. The graphic image references "a type of flower", summarising it. Precisely this habit of taking denominators in science seems to motivate most of the artist's work. For a rule that *generally* applies, also by definition excludes.

Keto Logua, *Cross section. Double Rose I*, 2020. Wood, tin, steel. Courtesy of the artist and LC Queisser.

One is converted into double its form

In *Cross Section*, diagrams used since the 19th century as objective documentation of the flower map its inner architecture in terms of relative number of petals, sexes, and depicts the flower's built-in crosscut and symbols. Keto Logua contacted a botanist, asking him how to draw the diagram of the principle of double flower, which is a known phenomenon in which a flower emerges within another through mutation. One is converted into double its form. Using the all-too-human system of categorising and stripping the sensible and sensitive, Keto Logua uses exactly the language of diagrams to speak of the deviant.

Roses were the first flowers to be documented to have this doubling, and as it was recognised as something beautiful, they were cultivated accordingly. As the artist says: "We often see mutations as a treat, because of their unpredictability, we don't know how to deal with them. Our approach to variation — which in my opinion to nature and natural objects is crucial, vital and beautiful, says something about our standards." So she designed her own. Over the four rooms of the gallery, she presents mutations, in metal inlay paintings.

Keto Logua, Natural History I (detail), 2020. Courtesy of the artist and LC Queisser.

There are limits to saying in language what the tree did

While today's voice seems borrowed from literature about cyborgs, non-humans, octopi and slime molds, we can wonder what happened to "evolution" as an idea. Keto Logua speaks of it not as small-step-evolutions but as change happening through many mutations, branching out rather than linearly reproducing. She pleads for a flowering in different directions, emphasising mutants as active, equal companions to science's denominators. "However mathematically subscribed, science is as a suggestion, rather than an endpoint." she says.

Her abstract looking work is charged with how language shapes our understanding, and knowledge shapes our behaviour. What matters shapes the way we speak of it. This is what Keto Logua indirectly refers to when talking about botanical, floral petals and sexes: multiplicity, ambiguity, and subjectivity. She doesn't push concepts forth but she elegantly layers them over the pieces, in words that "vitalise" and change one's perception of the works themselves. As María Lugones says it, "I am not a healthy being in the world that constructs me unplayful."

1/12/2021

Double flowers: on the work of Keto Logua | Conceptual Fine Arts



Keto Logua, *Bisexual and Radially Symmetric*, 2018/2020. Courtesy of the artist and LC Queisser.

monopol

Magazin für Kunst und Leben



JANUAR
2019

10,80 Euro, 14,50 CHF
Österreich 11,50 Euro
Luxemburg 12,00 Euro
Italien 14,50 Euro
Spanien 14,50 Euro

100 JAHRE
BAUHAUS
DAS HEFT ZUM
JUBILÄUM
PLUS: KUNSTJAHR 2019
Die große
VORSCHAU

In New York lässt KAI ALTHOFF Körper und Material schweben

Fast fürchtet man, der Boden könne das eigene Gewicht kaum halten, denn Kai Althoff hat in einem Gebäude direkt unter der Manhattan Bridge mitten in Chinatown die Räume mit nachgiebigen Dämmstoffen und bemalter Pappe ausgelegt. So sensibilisiert, lässt einen das schiere Schöne seiner Bilder fast schweben. Zwei junge Männer im Birkenhain entkleiden sich vorsichtig, die Beine ineinander verschlungen, alles bezeugt von einem kleinen Vogel. Auf anderen Bildern sind es Segnungsrituale, Situationen des Sterbens, des Kümmerns, in denen die Menschen sich berühren.

Althoff macht den Betrachter nicht zum Eindringling, nur zum Zeugen dieser zart-melancholischen Idyllen menschlicher Verbundenheit. Farben, ornamentale Muster und Bildausschnitte folgen diesem Prinzip des Verschmelzens: Sie harmonisieren und grenzen die Bildinhalte nicht voneinander ab, sondern vereinen sie zu einem Ganzen. Statt Wandtexten oder Werkangaben gibt es lediglich einen von Althoff verfassten Text, der sagt, dass eine konventionalisierte Sprache der Kunst die ästhetische Wirkung von Bild und Material nicht genügend erfasse: Die Realität gibt es nicht, und Worte versagen.

JULIET
KOTHE



KAI ALTHOFF „ABEND“, 2018



KETO LOGUA,
AUSSTELLUNGSANSICHT
ARS VIVA 2019,
KAI 10/
ARTHENA
FOUNDATION,
DÜSSELDORF

Düsseldorf zeigt die ARS-VIVA-Gewinner

Was man leider immer wieder vergisst: Ohne Fiktionen würde die Wirklichkeit humpern wie ein angeschossener Labrador. Die drei Ars-Viva-Preisträger rufen in ihrer Ausstellung im Düsseldorfer

Kai 10 die blinden Flecke von Massenmedien, Wissenschaft und Wirtschaft ins Gedächtnis: Es sind eigene Setzungen und Annahmen, die diese gesellschaftlichen Systeme am Laufen halten.

KAI ALTHOFF: „HÄUPTLING KLAPPERNDES GESCHIRR“, Tramps, New York, bis 20. Januar

Am deutlichsten legt Niko Abramidis & NE das Märchenhafte eines scheinbar auf Rationalität basierenden Bereichs offen. In seinen Zeichnungen, Installationen und Videos parodiert der Münchner Unternehmenswelten, indem er typisches Angeber-Design, -Architektur und -Jargon wie Zeugnisse einer untergegangenen Hochkultur aussehen lässt. Der Herrschaftsanspruch von Konzernen wird krass überzeichnet, doch die Bildwelten des Künstlers sind dann wieder zu erratisch, um als reine Satire durchzugehen. Dass sie bei der Preisträgerschau einer vom Kulturkreis der deutschen Wirtschaft ausgelobten Auszeichnung zu sehen sind, ist eine schöne Pointe.

Von diesem Mythenreich ist es nicht so weit zu Keto Loguas 3-D-Drucken und Computergrafiken, die auf wissenschaftlichen Modellen und Vorstellungen von prä- und überhistorischer Natur beruhen: die schon von Goethe imaginierte Urpflanze, die Visualisierung einer

urzeitlichen Landschaft, eine Skulptur aus Bienenstockelementen. Natürlich ist auch die vermeintlich objektive Wissenschaft von Fiktionen durchzogen. Statt Bilder einer überzeitlichen Natur produziert sie Bilder von „Natur“ – die in jeder Zeit anders aussehen.

Diese Schau hat kein übergreifendes Thema, doch auch Cana Bilir-Meiers Arbeiten triggern erkenntniskritische Überlegungen, in diesem Fall zum medialen Konstrukt des „Fremden“. Zu sehen ist das bedrückende Video „Semra Ertan“ über die Tante der Künstlerin. Die Schriftstellerin verbrannte sich Anfang der 80er-Jahre aus Protest gegen das Bild vom „Ausländer“, das in den Medien gezeichnet wurde, selbst. Die Wirklichkeit, die wir uns machen, kann tödlich sein.

DANIEL VÖLZKE

„NIKO ABRAMIDIS & NE, CANA BILIR-MEIER, KETO LOGUA“, Kai 10/ Arthema Foundation, Düsseldorf, bis 20. Januar