

exhibition text

MARTE EKNÆS: INSERT
13 April – 13 June 2010

Insert is the title MARTE EKNÆS (*1978 in Elverum, Norway) chose for her first institutional solo exhibition in Germany. The space in which she has installed her exhibition is in itself an insertion: the enclosure in the main hall of the Bonner Kunstverein. This permanent feature of the exhibition architecture since the refurbishment in 2006/2007, is here interpreted by EKNÆS as a frame into which she implements her works that are results of her observations of the city of Bonn, seen as an example of the urban environment. By inserting her show into the Bonner Kunstverein and, in a broader sense, into a social and architectural frame of reference, she utilises the enclosed interior to present interpretations and connections that cast light on the exterior.

She has picked out fragments of corporate and public environments, collective social life and leisure as source material for her sculptures, drawings, collages and prints. Deploying similar strategies to the paper surface and the gallery space, MARTE EKNÆS intersperses her carefully selected and mediated elements with large blank areas. In this way she creates a combination of high concentration of meaning and open space for free associations.

The Bonner Post Tower is designed with the aim of achieving maximum transparency, which requires high technology solutions and a strong core structure. Apart from this reinforced structure, as much as possible of the building is made out of glass, including external and interior walls, elevators, staircases. The floors are only frosted to avoid the vulgar problem of a direct view up into skirts of the women walking on the floor above. As the transparent facades give us a seemingly clear sight into this building, new surfaces (physical and administrative) are being put up to conceal information and to protect personal space. What we see is therefore layers of surfaces and a display of prestigious engineering, accompanied with an illusion that we have more of an understanding of how things work. This building thereby perfectly exemplifies the description of Robert Venturi of architecture often being "symbolically functional".

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This critical description is key to how EKNÆS studies many aspects of her surroundings and in developing form that casts light onto these phenomena she adopts it in her work and takes it further. The starting point for the two sculptures *Insert*, 2010, and *Wave*, 2010, was the "deceptive" quest for optimal transparency and the meaning of this. These two pieces are essentially structure and façade separated and installed next to each other. Dissecting a construction, she has created two sculptures that are reduced in their own form, and thereby open to new content.

Made from a pre-fabricated display rack, *Insert* simultaneously expresses the idea of a structure, suggesting floors or levels, as it is a tool, which has been stripped of its function. The inserted two-way mirror multiplies the parallel vertical lines of the rack as well as incorporates reflections of the surroundings into its form. *Wave*, 2010 consists of two curved sheets of Perspex in the almost transparent shades of 'Tropical Yellow' and 'Celestial Blue'. The outside curve is taken from the facade of the Post Tower, whereas the other bend is arranged to create a wave, seen from above and in the radiant outline on the floor. From the side the sculpture is merely a play of light and reflection, yet with its pastel tints and simply altered curve it evokes something exotic and artificially tropical. With simple alterations of form and colour the agenda is shifted into a territory seemingly far away from its original source, yet EKNÆS argues, one which is dominated by similar motivations.

The radiant shades of yellow and purple-blue in the edges of *Wave* are repeated again in the print, *Accentuate*, 2010. This is a detail of an appropriated photograph showing the light reflections on the top floor of the Post Tower, in highly accentuated colours.

Eknæs sees materials, strategies and concepts as equal elements in her process. Instead of applying one to the other, she creates levels that hover next to each other, blur and easily exchange places within the formal structure. This idea is most literally exemplified in the piece *Relational Decorative Column*, 2010. Here stickers made from photographs of lobby interiors taken by the artist and found on the internet are stuck on a clear Plexi tube. The repeated pattern and visibility of both, the back and the front, highlight these elements as decoration rather than social settings. Placed off centre on a Wii Balance Board, this piece also bridges the worlds of corporate office environment and customised leisure.

EKNÆS' methods take a step back from the facades of the structures we are surrounded by and the systems we use, redirect the emphasis to the motivations behind and implement these in new surfaces and presentations. She draws attention to the appearance of the mechanisms that govern our surroundings, makes new connections and opens up to subjective interpretations stretching outside the gallery space and into the urban landscape we are all experiencing.

MARTE EKNÆS studied at the Environmental Art Department of the Glasgow School of Arts and the California Institute of the Arts in Los Angeles before she completed her studies at Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design in London. Her most recent exhibitions include Momentum, The 5th Nordic Biennial of Contemporary Art in Moss, Norway, as well as the solo exhibition "Fountain" at Galerie Circus, Berlin.

Over the course of the exhibition, a catalogue will be published with articles by Kirsty Bell and Anna Dietz.

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