What Do We Do With It?

Berlin, Christiane Rohde


Vorrei farti una domanda specifica negli ultimi lavori. "A me sembra che siano ancora pronti a dare per scontato che la forma, mentre è un elemento della area che definisce la disposizione e la condizione di un ambiente, non sempre possa trovare una spiegazione. Inoltre, non sempre è chiaro dove iniziare e finire per individuare la forma. La formula è stata tradizionale e definita per secoli da esigenze fatte di carattere storico. Il design, al contrario, ha bisogno di un’area più ampia in cui gli aspetti storici e culturali possono essere considerati. Il meccanismo di passaggio dal design alla produzione deve essere un processo che preveda una sua dimensione storica e culturale."

Eva Berendes: "Il design è una forma di letteratura. Se un design è un’opera d’arte, deve avere una dimensione storica e culturale. Quindi, quando parliamo di design, abbiamo bisogno di un’area più ampia in cui gli aspetti storici e culturali possono essere considerati. Il meccanismo di passaggio dal design alla produzione deve essere un processo che preveda una sua dimensione storica e culturale."

In 1991, when the 87-year old Italian designer, instructor and artist Bruno Munari received the commission from the Italian furniture house Robots to design a paravent, he struggled with the idea of this foldable wall. The piece of furniture with origins in China and Japan came to Europe via France as a boudoir, a dressing room. The (erotic) play between hide and reveal, light and shadow was of little inspiration to the old man. What should he do with it? Munari designed a lightweight structure of metal...
In her solo exhibition at the Berlin gallery Sommer & Kohl, Eva Berendes showed three such free-standing room dividers. Lightweight structures, supported and defined by elegant black or white painted frames, mounted on pedestals, Berendes stretches colored string across the frames, resulting in surfaces that part almost imperceptively geometric forms into the space, creating a kind of wall that remains transparent at the same time. They almost seem like three-dimensional, abstract drawings. Berendes’ “Paravents” transform the exhibition space, re-organize it – in between the geometric, black patterns in “Paravent/Curtain” (2006), the window frame shows through to the other side of the room. In dialogue with a wall object made of rattan rods spanned with threads (“Paravent”1999), the drapery and the bowed rattan create movement in the space. As with many works by Eva Berendes, both works bear a calm sense of restraint while simultaneously exerting extreme presence. The connection of the frame constructions with fabric or drapery, without dividing or hiding it. “Paravents” transform the exhibition space, re-organize it – according to Berendes’ duty. The Milanese Munari gave a playful nod to Japan with the spelling of “Shinfù Kusè” spoken aloud – sometimes “honkai” is actually Milan slang for “What do we do with it?” Similar to Munari, Berlin-based artist Eva Berendes (*1974) incorporates and expands traditional handicrafts into her works: in curtain installations, fabric screens, mirror sculptures and reliefs. She has a predilection for the in-between:

"...between the second and third dimensions, between objects of art and handicraft, etc. Do you have a predilection for the in-between?"

Eva Berendes, the designer Munari also moved “between genres” and tried to carry over juridical methods from the fine arts to design, and vice versa. That was not always so simple, as one described in an interview: “It had always been easy for me to make people take me seriously. I play with children, and, in a society such as ours, anyone who plays with children runs the risk of being thought eccentric.”

Also, I am not certain that it is really necessary to affiliate a work with another object or method. And the area of decorative arts is particularly historically one to which women were connected: even in Berendes’ works or rattan sculptures. Her formal language comes from a special blend of Art Deco, Constructivism, Bauhaus. For the exhibition “The Eternal Flame” in Kunsthaus Baselland, Berendes divided a room with a semiopaque spraypainted curtain. In dialogue with a wall object made of rattan rods spanned with threads (“Paravent” 2006), the drapery and the bowed rattan create movement in the space. As with many works by Eva Berendes, both works bear a calm sense of restraint while simultaneously exerting extreme presence.

The basis, or better said, the framework for many of your works could be situated. The result is also their polarization within my works – and not as an in-between of two approaches and their implications, the questioning of whether or not it is always there where one expects it – or where transcendence actually comes into play, and where does transcendence actually come into play, and whether or not it is always there where one expects it – or whether it is. Or should these attributes be re-contextualized, and especially from a historical distance? Because it seems to me that space is still quite wittily preserved to be right there, where utopia was once asserted…

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