

A Space of Potential Mending

Inga Fonar Cocos' present installation is another stage in her ongoing preoccupation with ecological systems, which are organized by a structural logic that has as its principal aim the preservation of the system – which is necessary to prevent entropy, and for protection against a violation of the systemic balance between investment of energy and impoverishment. In not a few of her works Fonar Cocos in fact seeks for the structural logic of entropy, of the level of disorder, or more precisely – for those elusive borders between order and disorder, between form and stain and between the visibility of a thing and its erasure.

In the present installation this search crystallizes into an obsessive, meticulous and methodical spreading-out of kinds of systemic organization that are based on the form of the grid. The turn to the grid form designates a stage that on the one hand makes possible a high degree of systemic regularity, and, on the other hand, supplies many options for a recurring organization of the same pre-given regularity. This, for example, is how we are to understand the formal and structural logic of the series of works in ink on paper. These works reduce the spectrum of colors to black and white only (black as an essence in its own right and not only as the opposite of white); they are composed only of minus (–), plus (+) and diagonal (/) signs, and function as modular units, each of which is a kind of concrete demonstration of the regularity that exists in the series as a whole. Corresponding to this, the series of works on paper that hangs on the wall is organized spatially in a manner that makes it possible to look at each one of the units and at the entire series at one and the same time. This hanging is attuned to a manner of viewing which moves from the near to the distant, from the microscopic gaze to the panoramic. In the course of the eye's conditioned movement, images crystallize and decompose, analogically to the ways of crystallization and decomposition of ecological systems. The grid itself functions simultaneously as the base upon which the minus and plus energy signs organize themselves, and as a screen or net which conceals the diversity of forms and signs that are on the paper.

Another series of works on paper hangs on lines of steel cables and is organized in a row, in a manner which produces a diachronic process of viewing, on the time axis. It is impossible to see all the works all at once; they can only be seen one after the other, while the direction of viewing is unimportant: one can choose either one of the two directions. The works themselves were produced in a process slightly different from the series that hangs on the wall: after being painted on in ink they were charred and dipped in paraffin and wax, to preserve what remained from the charring. The use of preservative materials, organic and non-organic, is dominant in Fonar Cocos' work, and always takes on a double meaning: preservation for protection, mending or sealing – and preservation as petrification, imprisonment. The life that populates the wax and paraffin casings may be waiting to burst out as a kind of energetic potential but may equally be rotting and losing its existential dynamism.

The third series in the installation moves from the optic sphere of the eye and the abstract signifying systems into the bare and physical textures of the body. The choice of rubber, which is basically an organic material, stemmed from its tactile qualities, its flexibility and its perceptible sheen. These objects, which hang between the ceiling and the floor, were created by means of coiling, interweaving and combining various strips of rubber. Following the logic of preservation, the objects look they might be either unfinished or in the advanced stages of unraveling or disintegration. In some of the cases the clusters of interlaced rubber look like bundles of nerves in the body. In other cases the rubber bundles look like figurations of molecular structures, like series of chemical elements. In this series Fonar Cocos has succeeded in integrating the physical and concrete image of the body with its scientific representations, and has converted the concreteness of the material – in this case the rubber – into the system of signs that represents it.

The integration of the material with the abstract system of its representations echoes earlier stages in Fonar Cocos' work. In her previous exhibition, "There Are No Black Beehives" (Janco-Dada Museum, 1994), a beehive was put up as a central image for ordered production systems – active ecological systems that are based on a fine balance between processes of construction and destruction. Fonar Cocos' attraction to insect systems derives from the fact that they are better than

other biological systems at filling the most important function in nature: self-preservation. At the exhibition she displayed empty beehives and rusty iron boxes with objects in wax inside them. The box is a recurring image in Fonar Cocos' work, and constitutes a visual analogy to the concept of closed systems.

At that exhibition she also displayed empty and dismantled honeycombs, in such a way that it would be possible to notice their grid of octagons. In some of the works the grid was dismantled and then re-interlaced. Displayed beside the objects was the series of drawings titled *Box Structures*. What on the face of it looked like dense series of patches of abstract pen "scribbles", at a second viewing organized itself into images of boxes and aroused a sensation of obsessive repetitive activity, like that of the bees – except that unlike the case of the bees, it has no productive value. These series point to an existential impotence which in Fonar Cocos' work is identified with the human. Hence too the movement between organic and non-organic materials, between paraffin and wax, between what is taken from nature (rubber) and the industrial materials that are produced from it.

This existential impotence was particularly conspicuous in Fonar Cocos' project for the Central Bus Station in Tel Aviv. The Central Bus Station is undoubtedly a place which does not relate to the human – whether from the architectural or from the ecological or mental points of view. In the space Fonar Cocos was given, she placed a heap of empty batteries with cables stretched between them. What occurred in the room was a conversion of energy into a complete absence, non-preservation, an existential reversal in the framework of which the energy is drained from the system to create a state of structured entropy.

On the background of this vision of the human, we can more clearly understand Fonar Cocos' attraction to preservative materials, the presence of which in her works ranges from a concrete structural relation to the material, through to a conceptualization of it. It seems that in comparison to the "There Are No Black Beehives" exhibition and the project at the Central Bus Station, the present work marks a higher stage of abstraction: a shift from representation of systems to representation of the principles of systemic ordering, while reducing the materials to signs; a shift from material to a language which encodes within

itself the formal logic of systemic regularity. Only in this way can we understand the presence, in the present installation, of the grid in the black-and-white, which – unlike the structure of octagons of the honeycombs – is no longer a material remnant of an object.

Like the wax or the paraffin and their preservative function, the grid too has a double function: on the one hand, with its modular flexibility, it constitutes an almost ultimate actualization of possibilities of spatial ordering; on the other hand, it is perceived as a mechanical formation, obsessive in its compulsive repetitiveness to the point of voiding out the human. Between these two poles Fonar Cocos' works range.

Vered Maimon, September 1997

Works

1. "Plus Minus Sewn in Rubber"

Rubber, wires

"Untitled" .2

Ink on paper

"Untitled" .3

Charred wax paper

Installation, general view .4

Wall panel: ink on paper

Objects: rubber, wires

Lines: steel cables; paper, wax, paraffin

"Untitled" .5

Charred paper, wax, paraffin

Detail, from Installation .6

Rubber, wires

Name of exhibition: Plus|Minus|Black|White