

Katharina Dörr, Master Student (HBK 2011)

*Fragile structures. Unremarkable within the room, non-permanent in time.
Soon they will fall apart, vanish.
Disappear behind ephemeral layers.*

The time and space related works of Katharina Dörr reflect material changes, which primarily appear in processes of decay and interference. Daily materials, such as house dust, cacao or steam are investigated. All of them consist of fine particles. They create fragile layers that sensitively react to the environment's physical conditions and temporarily conserve traces. Her delicate forms are blown away, vanish, disappear.

The work *a laxy seam of care* (2011) can be seen as an example to explain these characteristics. In a studio and exhibition space, the artist dusted cacao powder into and in front of two heaters and as a result it spread on the surrounding part of the floor. The smoothly spread powder covered the surface and produced an aromatic scent. Smallest imperfections of the floor continued and were highlighted. Additionally, the cacao changed due to the air circulation and the visitors of the exhibition: drifts and footmarks remained as traces but also lead to diffusion and partial erasure of the dust layer.

Katharina Dörr's development during the course of the last years is marked by a decided interest in fragile structures. For her work *Dust Shelves* (2007) she applied house dust over dark boards. Within the context of the exhibition they appeared as pieces of art as well as surfaces to display the grey particles, which, by this, were turned into artworks. The fine layer soon took up air's and visitor's traces. In this sense, *Dust Shelves* – and later *a laxy seam of care*, too- was an open artwork, which included time, coincidences and recipients without explicitly asking for interaction.

Katharina Dörr's body of work mirrors her fascination for fragile structures and overlapping. In addition to dust, cacao and powdered sugar (*some serving*, 2010) she investigated momentary condensation droplets, left on a mirror by a water kettle: In *Home Ghost* (2010), the steam condensed in different forms on the cool surface, moistened it and created an ephemeral layer. The transition from one state of matter to the other, the coming back to its original state clarified that continuity and change belong together: substances might be layered by others or change their forms – but they cannot be erased completely.

In her diploma presentation *Habitation Investigation* (2010), the artist similarly reflected on processes of change, which imply overlay and removal. In three rooms of an empty flat, she developed interventions: for the mural relief *severe dream* she removed plaster in order to reveal the brick wall in two precisely chosen parts. Due to the removal, discoloured bricks and drill holes that testify the former use of the wall became visible. The interventions uncovered hidden structures of the depth. At the same time a visual overlay or shift developed: owing to the plaster gaps, unremarkable traces were pointed out and an optical balance between the walls was tared.

The ambiguous coexistence of discovery and covering becomes obvious by taking the example of another work, which was also presented in *Habitation-Investigation*. In an empty white room, Katharina Dörr placed a deep blue carpet that grew into a visible hill in the middle and spread in wave-like wrinkles to its borders. The title *Elevation* underpinned the sacred effect of the work and also hinted at the actual wrinkles: contrary to its conventional use, the carpet did not show a homogenous surface people could walk on easily. It was full of rises that made the irritated visitor stop at the threshold. The wish of looking underneath the blue fabric to perceive the bizarre forms remained unfulfilled. Only imagination allowed revealing the subcutaneous layers in the room. In its confrontation of the visible and the perceptible, *Elevation* made clear that each conception of a situation is individual and consequently far from invariable. What is ever constant in the change of perspectives and in the course of time? The interventions of *Habitation Investigation* showed, that deep layers from the past might survive but that they will be perceived differently within a new context. Reconstruction without loss is an ideal, which actually cannot be fulfilled.

The floor-relief *Idealist* (2011), a later work by Katharina Dörr, also only allowed an asymptotical approach to the apparently real past. In a room, the artist worked on the rubber flooring as if she traced the light that falls through a braced window close by. Although the position of the sun in the room was repeated cyclically, the actual reflection never conformed to the drawing. The speculated trace of the past turned out to be a construction. Seeing and thinking, perception and suggestion overlapped.

The artist's later works that are mentioned here show – in addition to sensual-haptic characteristics – conceptual qualities, too. Obvious is the question of how to find access to processes of the past. The basic conditions and limits of our perception become visible with the help of non-permanent phenomenons. Dissolving dust, vaporized water and wandering light generate an awareness of time, change and return.

Text: Astrid Köhler, 2011

Umberto Eco: Das offene Kunstwerk, Frankfurt am Main 1977.