

Hedvig Koertz Mikkelsen: ribbed transitions – joiner pieces

a text by Kathi Seebeck

The coffee-to-go-mold, the touch-pad-door, the plug socket

February 2016. Almost every train running throughout Germany provides comfortable back-friendly chairs to sit in, a whooshing panorama view either to the left or to the right, a little hidden heater on which people tend to place their cold feet in winter, a silver greyish metallic bin with two circular molds on the top (multi-fit, designated for coffee, water or fruit juice alike) as well as a plug socket under each double seat. And yet, what does this reveal? Very simple: as hard working 21st century human beings we like to open doors with a finger tip, we need this coffee and we wish to charge our electronic devices wherever we go.

It's the little, seemingly insignificant interior architectural settings – not only to be found on trains but in any space inhabited or used by human beings – that attract the interest of Hedvig Koertz Mikkelsen (1990). Taking her investigation of rooms and spaces as a starting point for her work the artist especially focuses on the elements that outline or shape a space (i.e. baseboards, doorframes) or those which provoke a certain human interaction (door handle, socket, bannister). Hedvig Koertz considers these elements as meeting points in a space: where the floor meets the wall, or where a human body meets the architecture. By taking dimensions, molding corners, tracing, echoing and perpetuating patterns, Hedvig Koertz examines structures of constituting architectural elements and thus how we humans exist in our environment.

A ribbed transition: a bumpy one

A transition is a movement, a passage, or change from one position, state, stage, subject, concept to another. It's a change. From where to what?

Koertz' investigation for her project *ribbed transitions – joiner pieces* takes place in two very different spaces: her own home in Amsterdam, a 'lived' space, as she calls it, where the research on overlooked architectural elements has started. Secondly, the exhibition space of FAK, studied from the perspective of an outsider rather than an inhabitant. The different starting points entail two categories of materials chosen to work with. Some of them carrying features like softness, flexibility and adaptability can easily be associated with the notion of 'home': a bed sheet, a silicon line, a group of kitchen sponges. Resembling the rather plain FAK space, its compositing structures being fixed, rigid and stable, the second class of materials or objects are stronger, bigger and sturdier: wooden planks, metal racks, roofing plastic.

However, this initial dichotomous situation doesn't remain divided. Hedvig Koertz attempts to combine, to interweave and to merge these two categories or stages of materials. In fact, when pointing at one of Koertz' works it is tricky to find a suiting description for it. Once a material or object is identified by the viewer it is already about to become something else:

The silicon shape of a door undeniably acts as a wall, directing the viewer towards the right. There, a little balcony, seemingly constructed from what must have been a chair, gives room for an emphasized view out of the windows.



photo: Hedvig Koertz

At the same time the balcony serves as a drying rack for a piece of a polythene sheet, not being wet at all. Yet what could have been wet is the bed sheet. Initially being soft and stretchy it seems to have fallen off its drying position, lying stiff on the ground, imitating the form of its defining counterpart. The bed on the floor: a hybrid in tension. Two greyish slats echoing the entrance doors' horizontal parts, gluing together the two wooden uprights and forcing them apart even so. Surrounding rubber bands, way too weak to tie together a door of this size, seem to do the work.

A room full of counterparts, opposites and logical consequences. Outlines as negative forms, derived from one space, are transferred into the other becoming positive, forming a transition themselves, opening a new spacial situation.

Hedvig Koertz points out that she found many architectural elements are ribbed. As if, in search for expression and in the attempt to overcome the air of mass production, the design of industrial products surfaces follows a particular standardized ornamental taste.

And here we've come full circle: when transplanting oneself in a state of transition (by travelling on a train for instance) similar standardized surfaces can be discovered: a ribbed coffee cup placed on a ribbed greyish bin.