

Construction. Reconstruction. Extension.

by Kerstin Stakemeier

“Wer nach allen Seiten offen ist, ist nicht ganz dicht.”¹

This does not concern HAMMANN VON MIER. Not at all. Because they don't – fiction 1 – produce political art. Because they don't – fiction 2 – surrender to the depths of a particular medium. It does not concern them because their work is not open to all sides. Their artist books are no rendition of services, participation is embarrassment, their own development amounts to the serial practices of role models. HAMMANN VON MIER are not open. They are contained. Their portfolio starts out with a glossary: “Setting, Training, Branding, Performance T, Overnight Highspeed Publication”. A series of formal categories to enable self-identification. There is no place here for the pathos of autonomy, which has clung to art ever since it freed itself from artistry. But here there is no return to artistry either: form here always arises out of its application, but this application always remains autonomous.

No Dichtung 1 / No Fiction 1

Political art as a genre repeats the brutalism of that dividing line that was once drawn right through the lived experience of all artists, distinguishing their art from their lives. Political art does lament this distinction - but it does so autonomously. HAMMANN VON MIER do not repeat this dividing line, they exercise art as an applied life instead. They exhaust the exposure inherent in processes of training, diagrammatically repeating their settings and establishing themselves as players without ultimately emancipating their work from these processes to present an autonomous result. In this case autonomy does not appear as a privilege to be fought but presents itself within the absurdity of its pointlessness: a precise enactment of preset specifications as an autonomous arrangement.

And HAMMANN VON MIER are doing everything right: They visit New York, they visit Venice, take up residencies, collaborate with other artists, visit studios, visit galleries, publish books for/with other artists. However the politicality of their art is not a gesture characterised by institutional critique, but rather is owed to the factual international universalization of this behavioural pattern for young artists: a protocolary empiricism of the “Must-Do's” of contemporary art. Autonomy is existential. Political art is directive. From the protocols of an artist's life-form HAMMANN VON MIER extract the undirectedness that is buried within these pre-established paths, the futility inherent in these protocols, exposed whenever they aren't used to naturalize one's own thriving for expansion. And this is exactly what HAMMANN VON MIER are not: expansive. By applying the respective forms of their works as something externally determined, but subsequently separating them from the face value or the purposes associated with those forms and instead consequentially completing their formal status, they create a serial but yet precise individual arrangement instead of a new, a HAMMANN VON MIER universalism.

No Dichtung 2 / No Fiction 2

The media used in art, the borders of its genres, entail a history of form in which progress and regress are distinguishable. However in the case of HAMMANN VON MIER no publisher was created out of their joint practices of conception, design, materiality, realisation and distribution of artist's books. No performance duo arose from their joint training arrangements and implementation. And no sculptural practice was created out of architecturally strictly drawn interventions in space. And yet there is one artistic medium dominating HAMMANN VON MIER's use. Time and again sculpture ends up being the interventionist medium of their choice, starting with their first joint work in 2012 (recreating the ceiling of the Münchner Kunstpavillon using paper, including the subsequent destruction of their fake) up until the Debütantinnenausstellung at the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Munich in 2015. Wherever “High Performance Art, Player, Setting, Training, Branding, Performance T, Overnight Highspeed Publication” acquire a physical dimension and enter a room, they elegantly lapse into the mundane materialisms of the formal structures they previously determined in such a conceptual way.

A piece of wall in a white yet dirty room at the Akademie der bildenden Künste is furnished with a carefully made sweep onto which a video is projected. The room is too bright for the video. In the video the observer sees another white, empty room, HAMMANN VON MIER's new studio. Between the framing columns, elegant forms of future works rotate in a faded image, while in the Academy room the trope of the sculptural assumes three other forms of appearance: far from being at the center of the setting, yet the sculptural yields this installation's central works: we encounter. A tiled surface with a thin lumber board on which the 3rd “Overnight Highspeed Publication” is presented that was produced for the opening. The unpainted top side of the covering of a projector (that is yet containing chalk marks), otherwise painted entirely in white. The handle bar of a racing bike, hanging on a wall: a silver, slightly bent pipe wrapped in black cords, in black fabric. Sculpture here is as omnipresent as it is casual. And where a formal analysis as an artwork, as a specific form, a specified matter, as an object of art would be feasible in relation to the handle bar, the other two objects occur as sculpture merely because they exceed or undershoot their mundane function. The handle bar, too, is drawn back into the life style of its original material by its environment. The purely artistic medium lives only virtually, merely in the video, in the future, in the new studio which remains faded however. Neatly exhibited in a panorama of particularisms. And again the forms arise out of functionalisms, which are alienated, casually made autonomous by HAMMANN VON MIER.

Yes. Dicht. / Yes. Contained.

HAMMANN VON MIER produce a density which does not run rampant. There is no developmental logic, there is no case of one project following logically from the previous one. Each and every project demonstrates the possibility of the next one. But its starting point remains as yet undetermined. The world is so full of functionalisms becoming form that it is possible for functionalisms to become form exactly everywhere. That is one of the reasons why there is no sharp divide between the single pieces of work. Again and again they cross over into series. Elements reappear without repeating themselves because by the next exhibition they've already lost the functional value, which they'd been assigned at that moment. Performance arrangements merge into the sculptural just as they do into the graphical. And the graphical itself loses its boundaries again and again. If one looks through HAMMANN VON MIER's joint publications one by one it becomes apparent that each one is characterised by a clear language of form. Typography often runs sculpturally through the pages. There is no graphical grid either since it seems to shift in its game development and gain momentum within the publication.

No, it is the mobility, which can be found in all of HAMMANN VON MIER's productions. No medium remains isolated since functionalism and autonomy continuously swap sides. Each work starts out with a seemingly clear-cut utility value but subsequently is characterised by its consistent shift. The utility value becomes autonomous because its form loses its functionalism.

HAMMANN VON MIER

And yet the artists' signature returns as a formalism without boundaries. Their own identity repeated incessantly without offering anything, as an unwieldy element everywhere in this text, as jewellery worn on the fingers and the necks of its two producers, on a t-shirt worn during a performance, or in the signature of the formats. HAMMANN VON MIER is a brand which is open to no sides, but instead incorporates what should become HAMMANN VON MIER and what, with a meticulously uneconomic accuracy, will be made dissimilar to itself in the process. Until it finally appears autonomous enough to involuntarily become a piece of work itself. So that it attains its own perspective. However, it might just as well be picked up again, worked with further, again being made autonomous. HAMMANN VON MIER are acting out with a steady line of production which seemingly tries to relentlessly turn its own development level back to zero. Again and again they alienate a functional arrangement from itself. Next functional form.