

Sculptural Moments Photography and Sculpture in Jakob Hunosøe's works

Text by Marie Laurberg, curator

Sculpture and Photography. Seen from a material point of view they are placed at each their end of the spectrum of artistic means – the sculpture's tactile materials, such as clay, stone, plastic, earth and bronze, as opposed to photographic pixels. Whereas the sculpture is tangible, three-dimensional and present in the room as a body, the photograph is transient. The photograph is created by light, it captures a fragment of reality, allowing itself to be manipulated, to be transformed by a mouse click. Despite the differences between these two artistic media, however, their starting point is the same: human being's attempt to maintain something in a permanent form. Whereas the purpose of the traditional sculpture's lasting materials such as bronze and marble was to create durable monuments, the photograph is able to capture a single moment and to save it for posterity. If the photograph thus seems more transient than the physically tangible sculpture, it rises above the world of objects with all its fluctuations by cutting out one moment of the stream of time.

Between sculpture and photography – between the physical and the transient – Jakob Hunosøe's works unfold. In his pictures, the everyday world of objects is put together in unusual constellations. In one of the photographs, a vacuum jug is balancing on the reversed shade of a floor lamp; here, the two objects go surprisingly well together. At the very moment that the balancing act succeeds, a small tableau occurs, a tableau harmonized in terms of colour and form; a possibility that can only be realized in one single moment and is maintained in the photograph as a permanent state.

By manipulating everyday objects, Hunosøe stages a series of special sculptural moments to be immortalized by the camera. A red tomato shines like a coloured light bulb from a plug outlet, the glass part of a coffee maker swells up in soft bulges, a pile of beer glass balances, supporting a banister. The innate sculptural potential of rather common objects such as chairs, lamps, radiators, kitchen utensils, bathroom equipment, rackets and tools are released in the photograph.

Instead of uncovering the surroundings matter-of-factly, Hunosøe employs the photograph as a means of giving a new version of reality. Through simple artifices such as mirrorings, additions and unexpected combinations, he adds to his motifs a new poetical dimension. The photograph becomes an instrument used to look at the world from a new angle and to uncover new meanings of everyday life. This poetical employment of the photograph resembles the photographic experiments used by the Surrealists in the 1930'ies, for example Brassai's »sculptures involontaires« (involuntary sculptures), in which crumpled bus tickets, men's hats and other everyday objects were photographed from angles uncovering their erotic dimensions. The world of objects was staged by the Surrealists as an inexhaustible ocean of messages from the unconscious.

Even though his photographs also play with the idea that the objects have their own life, Hunosøe's approach is not psychologized to the same extent. He combines a poetical and imaginative humour with the systematism and interest in common objects of conceptual art. Every set-up is based on a single clear idea explained in objective titles such as »Wine Bottle Replacing Light Bulb« or »Shadow in a Cup of Milk«. The intention of the stagings is not to seduce or convince the audience; in fact, the titles reveal the often simple artifices on which every picture is based. On the other hand, his pictures can be seen as a continuous series of experiments, and the interiors that he depicts are in the nature of experimental laboratories. The »pseudo-scientific« experiments are not aimed toward a specific result, but are carried out in their own right. The pictures are consciously unsystematical and playing in their approach, and the stagings often result in fine poetical effects.

We, the viewers, cannot help wondering how the motifs have come into being. How come the flame is bending when the candle is bending? And how does the sink manage to send the water jet from the tap back in a perfectly soft curve? None of these manipulations, however, are done by using digital aids, though it would have been easier in many cases, for example in the white set-up, in which chairs, service and even a spot from the coffee cup mirror each other perfectly on an axis. Only minimal details reveal that this scenery is not merely mirrored on a computer; it is actually set up laboriously, part by part. Hunosøe's pictures contain many such low-tech manipulations, and their analogous or hand-made dimension actually becomes a point in its own right; despite the numerous possibilities of composing virtual pictures on two-dimensional screens used by modern-day photographers, these pictures insist on the tangible, on arranging, adapting and playing with the real, physical world of objects hidden under the surface of the picture, and on searching its many unpredictable coincidences. Here lies the sculptural dimension of Hunosøe's pictures.

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