

## MOTOR

*Cecilia Canziani*

I am told this is the last show of the exhibition cycle *Bettina Buck invites*, as it seems to Bettina that, with the current invitation to Marie Lund, this project reached a state of completion. Yet, I sense that this last episode could also mark a new beginning, as in her work, Bettina Buck often claims for a time that is nonlinear, cyclical, and that re-inscribes her works over and over, through different moments, and different forms. Completion, she affirms with her work, is only a momentary state that exists between germination and collapse – an attitude shared with Marie, and that we can regard as a basis for their dialogue.

The invitations are based on an ineludible elective affinity, and the whole structure of *Bettina Buck invites* suggests that the project, is something very different to a two-person show and results in more than the sum of two parts. There is a deliberate slow pace in the succession of the invites, just four since 2009 – and incidentally, all women – : the guest is always carefully chosen, necessary. There seems to be also a deliberate timing in the invitations, as if each episode marks a specific state in the work of Bettina Buck, and offers her the occasion – and us – to reexamine her own practice. Also, the guest is never a neutral presence and can very well reverberate its shadow on us: each episode could also represent a moment of rupture from a consolidate practice, or a physical space opened up to allow a change. In this respect, each episode marks a reached state, and undermines it by creating the premises for a diversion.

It is then from this perspective, that we have to look at the actual exhibition: a conversation that Bettina Buck desired to have, and in this moment, with Marie Lund. A conversation of a particular kind, one that takes place through objects in a physical space. A conversation, also, that takes the place of a monologue, since each show stems from the invite for a solo exhibition, and unfolds in a intertwined dialogue, and in which – in the way we walk in the space, the way our gaze selects and brings together, we can take part.

And of which I am a most privileged guest, since I know both artists well enough that they judged appropriate to invite me to write about this exhibition, and because I know the project since its very beginning, having written about the first exhibition in this series. I always thought that there was a strong affinity in the work of Bettina and Marie, and I wasn't surprised when Bettina announced to me, this summer, that her next *Bettina Buck invites* would be with Marie. But writing about their show turned out more complicated than I thought. To play with the intimate knowledge I have acquired with their work over the years, and given the physical distance I have to the show, being in Italy, they decided to feed me information in steps, and therefore I received the images of the show just now, at the time of revising this short text.

As they both know, I have a sort of fixation with titles, captions, and the minimal written apparatus that a work requires, so when I heard the title of the show, the first information released, I thought it was a perfect frame for the exhibition I started to imagine. In the email I received, *MOTOR* was written in capitals. It is a powerful, coarse yet ironic title, it suggests action, sweat, noise and muscles at work. So, yes: very adequate to the work of

Bettina Buck and Marie Lund, who never shy away from addressing, questioning, redefining sculpture as bare presence and its (patriarchal) canon. *MOTOR* contained, for me, an allusion to their interest in the brutality – weight, gravity, surface - of materials they employ in their work: bronze, concrete, marble, stone. At the same time it suggested an articulation of sculpture through gesture, a performativity of the object that they both explore and address.

If the title sets the right tone to look at the exhibition, the works that the artists selected for the show – a list which I received in a second email, a few days ago – seemed to trace a path that while reinforcing an affinity unpicks specific aspects of each, and evokes works that are here not present in the space, as if each work acts as *pars pro toto*.

In the video *Interlude*, we see Bettina Buck carrying a large object across the countryside. In the video, the artist walks at a regular pace, stopping at times to rest, then getting up to aimlessly survey the landscape again. There is no end or beginning to her Sisyphean action, that performs the incongruous encounter between the pastoral landscape and a solid, big, bulky weight. Such contrast between surfaces (the natural and the artificial, the idyllic and the monstrous, high art and popular culture) is often employed by both artists as a strategy to elude the seduction of form, and forces the viewer to consider the sculpture as resulting from opposing semantic registers. Separating and considering the distinct elements of this work, we can unpick three key terms: volume, image, performance, which can then serve, as the position of the video as a foreword suggests, a subtitle to the exhibition.

Marie Lund's work often addresses the relationship between image and object, painting and sculpture: *Flat Bed* brings together in an impossible embrace silk and concrete. Here, five Pashmina scarves with their folds, layers and drapes have been cast in concrete plates. Existing both as images and sculptures, they seem to be in dialogue with a site specific piece that Bettina made for the exhibition, and that occupies the space outside the exhibition room: a slab of foam, pressing against a brick structure of the wall, visible through the frame of the window, as an image. (Incidentally, this piece brings to mind *Setting*, by Marie Lund, a series of screens mounted on aluminum frames, one of which was leaning on a concrete block that is part of the floor of the gallery space where they were first exhibited, the others on existing objects - a ladder, a chair - working as markers of the space and transforming a volume into an image, an image into a solid object, and at the same time declaring their impermanence).

*Pressed Foam*, 2012 and *Untitled Marble Block*, 2013 by Bettina Buck, are similar pieces in the way in which they bring to form tension, by the effect of piling three different elements: the force operated by the weight of the stone is made visible by a gentle curve, an indent on the soft and velvety surface of the foam and felt. The whole construction seems to be justified by the wish to make a verb visible. To press. Time is an immanent presence, made visible as gravity and weight, and seems to be recalling in its redundancy another work by Marie Lund, *Level*, in which a marble slab presses a wool carpet.

Casting and carving are two verbs that indicate two different approaches to sculpture, and frames it as a presence between a void and a volume. Both Bettina and Marie have employed these approaches: the void is the space where a work hides (*Wall, Falling Gallery Surface* by Bettina Buck), is produced (*Relic* by Bettina Buck) or resurfaces (*Casts* by Marie Lund).

I am now looking at the photographs of the freshly installed exhibition and I wish to see it in the flesh. The skin of the objects, its surfaces, porous or sleek, irregular or unsullen, opaque or shining, always tactile, are in full display here. Their deep knowledge of materials (their *love* for materials, I dare to say) and their understanding of sculpture as form, object, gravity is ultimately both denied and made more visible on this very place in which a volume and the spectator's gaze meet: the surface, a seductive yet powerfully resonating screen.