

Galerie Francesca Pia

Vaclav Pozarek

HOW (hot or what)

August 31 – October 19, 2019

Opening Friday August 30, 2019, 18–21

HOW (hot or what) is the second solo exhibition of Vaclav Pozarek (b. 1940 in Budweis CZ, lives and works in Bern) at Galerie Francesca Pia. Brought together are works from all phases of the artist's career. Presented in the front space are early works from the 1970s created during his student years in Hamburg (Hochschule für Bildende Künste) and London (St. Martin's School of Art), where the artist studied under, among others, Almir Mavignier and Anthony Caro. *Schularbeiten* depicts models for spatial interventions that Pozarek conceived for public space. Also on view are two works made of rubber, as well as three smaller works made of wood, the primary material of the artist who is a trained toolmaker and also attended the Prague Film School prior to studying art.

Photographs of architecture and sculpture are a common thread throughout Pozarek's artistic body of work. Since 1974, he has continuously documented works of art and buildings on museum and city excursions. These are clandestine images. Amateurish and shot from the hip, they have a casual quality. The acquisition of art history is the focus—a documenting of passing through various cultural spaces. The archive of images he has created counteracts the official canon. The photographs serve Pozarek as a primary source for his own sculptural works and evince an artistic attitude that does not see itself as solitary but as part of a trans-generational and, for Pozarek, genuinely non-hierarchical discourse. The photographs are subjective and fragmentary. The context, the institutional and architectural framing of the objects, is always evident. Many of the architectural photographs depict the edges of buildings and their interlockings with others. Pozarek is interested not in the autonomy of the artwork but in how it is embedded socio-culturally. He is fascinated by stylistically heterogeneous phenomena—"impure" superimpositions that have evolved over time. The artist also collects old photographs of architectural and sculptural works from all eras (with a particular emphasis on photographs published by Edizione Alinari in Florence). Pozarek's conceptual-archival approach to photography is reminiscent of André Malraux's *Musée imaginaire*.

The photographs attest to Pozarek's formal interests, which are also evidenced in his drawings and sculptures. His photographs of façades inform sketches, such as the Venice (2005) series or individual drawings of façades. Here he continues his interest in the history of architectural forms, drawn with quill-pen or ink wash. Condensed in these are the artist's numerous pursuits, including his collecting of photographs, graphic artworks, books & ephemera and his practice as a graphic artist, typographer, or exhibition and furniture designer. The drawings of façades began in 1987 as architectural portraits of actual buildings from New York and Chicago. Subsequently he has created drawings of his own invented forms.

Found materials play an important role in his sculptures. Pozarek uses mainly old wood, which he refurbishes and repaints. The agglomeration of various usages activates the works. The (anti-) colors of the sculptures are based on paints used in interior spaces. Brown, ocher, and white tones dominate the color spectrum. Certain works are created with floor wax or stains. These are applications designed to protect rather than decorate objects. There is no trace of sumptuousness here. Constructivist and Minimalist avant-garde reference systems inform his body of work, which seems to partially disintegrate within them. Pozarek operates in the mode of weak authorship. *Löffelfrau* is an interpretation of Alberto

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Giacometti's famous sculpture from Kunsthhaus Zürich (1926), which, compared to the reference work, does not evoke tribal associations.

In the exhibition it is possible to make out basic formal elements such as boxes, rods, and panels, which form various constellations together. Pozarek makes use of anonymous, hand-crafted, or industrially manufactured functional objects. He selects them for their specific qualities (related to construction, age, or function) and integrates the objects into his laconic, sculptural arrangements. "For Pozarek, such extra-artistic objects are useful if they can serve as elements within autonomous, formalist-oriented works," writes curator Ulrich Loock. Many of the works function according to the principle of seriality and are not displayed on pedestals; some of these are even potential support structures themselves. On occasion, Pozarek has designed vitrines and pedestals and conceived entire exhibition architectures—his transport crates also resemble stand-alone works. Evident in Pozarek's sculptures are ongoing references to the history of art that often function in the manner of a rebus. Design traditions are traversed, such as in the work *Wandausschnitt* (1987), where the Duchampian bottle rack has been made two-dimensional and formally resembles an engraving by Alessandro Specchi, depicting a construction by Bernini inside St. Peter's Basilica. Gestures like these have parodic traits; at the same time this unorthodox combination breathes new life into the historical material.

Arthur Fink

Vaclav Pozarek lives in Bern. More recent institutional solo shows include Bündner Kunstmuseum (2012), Kunstmuseum Solothurn (2015), and MAMCO (2018). More recent institutional group exhibitions include gta Exhibitions (2015), Kunsthalle Bern (2018), and LUMA Westbau (2019).