

OF WAITING AND EXPECTATIONS

Verena Thürkauf in Galerie Werkstatt, Reinach BL, 2000

Text in: Basellandschaftliche Zeitung, 10.10.2000

by Isabel Zürcher

Verena Thuerkauf has never stood out as an artist of grand gestures. Based on the observation of her own body language, or of the traces that any movement will leave in space, her installations have always developed into archives of a course of time that can be used to reconstruct, calibrate and compare

personal experience. Time is also the key element of Thuerkauf's art now exhibited in Galerie Werkstatt. It is the primary unit of measurement that visitors must bring along. "WARTEN – ein Versuch" (Waiting: An Essay) – the title of the exhibition – has to do with Time, typically with a kind of time that we tend to think is not put to profitable use. And indeed the visitors do need time to find out about their own expectations from the exhibition ... time spent waiting, precisely.

"warte warte nur" (just wait wait) can be read on a wall in orange lower-case letters, and one is allowed to take the artist at her word: there are a number of seats for waiting in the rear end of the former blacksmith's shop, and a counter along the wall of the main room invites visitors to dig in their elbows and thus also take up a waiting position. Who does so will leave traces of his or her presence in, and is in turn marked by, the chalk dust that is the remainder of a huge gestural drawing on the wall. Opposite this wall, a tower of white cardboard boxes pushes into the room from out of a niche. Exactly measured to fit into the recess and agreeing with the architectural space by the white paint, the imminent crash is forestalled by the top box being wedged between the ceiling and the pile of boxes. After coming to a halt as well, the visitor might finally pace to and fro on the series of wooden planks covering the room from an underground compartment, thus fathoming the waiting time by creating an acoustic stimulus.

Looking at the long time that is peculiar to the waiting process, at the emptiness that comes with waiting, we find ourselves right in the middle of the little experiment in which Verena Thuerkauf exposes her visitors to the room. Whether we begin deciphering the architectural symbols of its history or whether we remember the last time we were waiting for a train, pacing up and down a railway platform, we will easily acknowledge that Thuerkauf has relieved this room from the burden of great expectations. Without any religious exaltation, she offers a space for dialogue with art that refers to us as well as to itself. One may see it as a constraint that here a minimum of evidence presupposes a very specific body language by which the waiting person can express his or her acting or non-acting. But thus the call to be present on the spot all the more becomes an invitation to give full attention to the motions of one's own body in waiting.



Photo: Armin Roth, Basel