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New work by Marga Knaven

IN THE ARTICLE ON MARGA KNAVEN THAT I WROTE IN 2009 she told me she was looking for ways to present her work as wall objects. In the past period she succeeded in this quest. Step by step she found ways to make the works fit to put them on the wall. It was important to her to attach them to the wall invisibly using the space in the folds for the nail or screw.

Also step by step the pieces became larger. But by doing so, the risk of deformation also increased. Therefore she started to add enforcing decorative elements. At first the decorations, consisting of rings and geometric forms in a different colour, stayed inside the boundaries of the object. But more and more they became more or less autonomic elements communicating with the environment. Also the forms changed from geometrical to more organic. These elements also emphasised the conjecture of space in the pieces and were meant to “create a possibility not only to communicate with the environment but also for a more open communication with the observer” as Knaven states. Sometimes these elements were the means to hang the pieces on the wall. In these cases a visible nail or screw was part of the work.

But format was limited, not only by the size of her kiln but also by the fact that the work simply became too heavy. Another important issue was

the fact that the objects seemed to lose their “lightness” as Knaven states. To her it is important that her porcelain objects maintain a certain lucidity and transparency. By making the slabs she uses for her objects too large (the largest slab was 50 x 30 in.) she had the feeling she would lose this important quality of her work.

When she arrived at this point in her process she decided to cut her slabs into different sized ribbons, which she uses to combine with three-dimensional objects. At first the size of the ribbons varied in length and width. Later on she started using different colours in a single piece.

For a long time Knaven has been fascinated and intrigued by Expressionist painters. She was looking for ways to ‘paint’ with porcelain in space

the way they did with oil on their canvases. In her latest work she

has found a way of doing this. With her expressionistic approach she started creating wall-sculptures characterised by strong movements. The ribbons wind around each other ending in different directions, thus creating the suggestion of endlessness. By drawing or painting in this way the works became more spatial, dynamic, chaotic and transparent, the latter literally because the spaces that the ribbons embrace have now become part of the object.

Article by Gertjan van der Stelt



Facing page, left: *Artikel 005*.

Facing page, right: *Chaos 013*.

Above left: *Textuur 001*.

Above right: *De Rode Lijn*.

What strikes me the most in these new works is the fact that space is no longer contained, hidden and to be imagined. It exposes all its mystery. Each curve, curl and crease from the ribbons creates a variety of imaginable architectural space. Compared to the folded pieces, these works look more fragile, more vulnerable, but also more aggressive and extraverted. The single slab wall-pieces have a more contemplative character. They are literally more closed and therefore, in my opinion, more mystical.

Where the wall-pieces made from a single slab are sometimes bi-colored, the series of new pieces started out to be monochromatic. The colours were subdued and vary from anthracite to blue, yellow and red. The next step in colouring the objects was to use two and, later on, more different colours. She also started to use glaze on parts of the objects. By using different colours and partially glazing the objects, she brings accents to the work. Certain movements become clearer and intensify the other directions in the objects. It invites my eyes to unwind the chaos in the ribbons, directed by the deviating colour.

The pieces Knaven started with were quite small and so she was challenged to put several of them close together, creating a possibility to make an installation, thus incorporating a complete wall. When hung together in this way, these wild and seemingly random objects begin to communicate with each other, creating a world of their own. Although the titles refer to the seeming chaos, the objects are the result of a well thought out plan and the result of a substantial amount of concentration.

Another way that Knaven uses her pieces to inhabit the room and space is by hanging them over another volume, such as she has done in the standing pieces

with a block of wood. By putting them on the wood in this way the pieces have become more spatial, accentuating the chaos opposing it to the clear and unprocessed volume of wood which is not merely the carrier of the porcelain object but an indissoluble part of the sculpture.

In *Artikel 005* and *Chaos 013* she combines slabs with ribbons, here the mystery of hidden space returns. In *Artikel 005* the slab starts to function as a wrap. The ribbons that tie the 'package' together are rolled up so also the conjecture of space is re-introduced. Next to folding and draping, Knaven uses wrapping and rolling. The object is similar to a birthday present and its colours accentuate the festive character of the piece. The black pieces tend to look sterner, mainly because of their colour but also because Knaven did not make packages in black. Should she have done that, I doubt that they would have looked as festive as the more colourful pieces.

Marga Knaven started making her most recent work in order to make larger objects step by step. But just as it was with the single slab pieces she will be limited by the size of her kiln and the weight of the increasing masses of porcelain necessary for larger and larger objects. I am curious what will be the next step in this continuing story.

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