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AXEL T SCHMIDT  
STIFFENSTUFF  
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**Heiner Reber**  
**Axel T Schmidt, DIE HERDE - STIFFENSTUFF**

Here stands STIFFENSTUFF, not pleasing and not pliant. DIE HERDE blocks up the way. What Axel T Schmidt shows to us is obstructive, disturbing and complex.

***self interpretation***

When an artist speaks about his work, it is mostly helpful for the viewer to be provided with one possible approach to a piece of art. Schmidt offers a hint: polar caps and glaciers are melting, hence bringing forward long time hidden and undiscovered things. Mother nature has to give free what she had buried thousands of years before.

One centenium ago Sigmund Freud discovered, what is identical to this nature's revolution in a formal way. With his „concept of the unknowing“ he achieved, that motions, hidden in the human soul, are to be accepted as a relevant influence in everybody's life. Since then it got to general consciousness, that the visible is based on the invisible. This could be a first mark, when tracking STIFFENSTUFF.

We can rely upon the artist in the way of telling about his work of art, giving us a globoscope view. At the same time he puts up a sign, which is leading to two directions. On one hand, the political one: nature evolves in a radical way. We have to face the changes going together with all these confusions and inexplicabilites, produced by such a crisis. On the other hand, the second direction: the artist's view onto reality. The human caused change of climate provides us with the chance, to obtain view onto unseen things. „Grab the odds and make the best out of it!“, the artist shouts, „watch and see, horrible lovely things yawn to us.“

Both aspects are evident. They make the obstructive more likely to handle and even more digestible. They offer a critical artistic dialogue with a future, the world never ever happened to face and to cope with. And one is likely to add a microscopic to the macroscopic view onto things, because of what we look at has a meaning far beyond this origin of inspiration.

***material and form***

Wax and ice are materials, standing in direct opposition to each other, even further than fire and water. These twins cause some effect, just think of a steam engine. Wax and ice are more distant than heaven and earth. With the horizon both obtain a common boarder line.

Wax is at least the sacred material and it incorporates more than others the evolution of ritual and cultural human being. Wax as a candle is the donator of light and a symbol for the supernatural. Pure as material it is the mother of all depiction and a maid to the sculpture. Wax plates gave birth to the alphabetisation of the world and wax cylinders first stored accoustic signals, making them audible again. And wax plugs saved Odysseus' and his men's lives, protecting their ears from the sirens' songs.

But first of all wax is a material, friendly to the human being. It is smooth, bendable, good smelling, warm. In short terms: it stands for life. Its ground temperature is similar to the human one and therefore it is modelable just by one's hands.

Absolutely in the opposite stands the ice: as the strangest state of water it is hard and pain causing, a state of stiffness and negation, a pointer of eternity. As ice the life giving water changes into a lethal menace. Beautiful in its nature but tricky and dangerous.

Schmidt puts these two materials together. They are the heart of DIE HERDE. Life and death unite in the sculptures, or even better: they fight for the control over the form. The ice puts limits to the wax and forces it into its exterior shape. The wax brings life to ice, changes its state and enriches its inner structure.

But it is a short fight for power, because in the moment of unification both opponents split and although opposing, both materials have something in common. Being very jumpy, both have fundamental cause onto each other. And this cause is the one and only mutual one: the moment of unification is the moment of separation. No contact exists further more. Nothing reminds to that moment of encounter.

Water repellent wax leaves no traces on the ice and the ice, first appearing as the stronger element within that strive comes out as the weaker one, its transitoryness being evident from the very beginning.

First of all the wax cast and the melted ice remain. But they are, even intentionally formed, not the piece of art. Water can be frozen again and the wax cast can be melted back into its original state. This seems to be a pity, because the wax formations are nevertheless impressive and have great aesthetic qualities.

### ***work of art***

After the demolition of cast and form nothing reminds to the unification and this „nearly nothing“ is the art. Reproduced on glass put in front of us we face the moment, we are talking about. The moment of unity, the moment of death of ice, changing to water, and the moment of stiffening wax. And each moment is different, caused by the colour of the casted wax and the singularity of the form giving ice. The artist's way of penetrating the block differs each time, too. The materials are more or less free, the artist just controls the process but not the product. That is why the casted wax does not matter. The main part plays the artist, because he finally fights for total control over the artefact.

Central motif of Schmidt's concept is the relation of freedom and control., the tension and the change between them. Both are substantial for DIE HERDE, what does not mean „family“ nor „troop“ neither „army“ or just „heap“. Schmidt's creation hits exactly, what Aristoteles writes about the human, being a „zoon politicon“, living together, only able to exist living together but staying self determined all the time. Not only here but in all of Schmidt's works this is an elementary aspect.

With the technical support of photography and printing the artist immortalizes the moment and controls our perception of the moment, being as unique as the piece of art, showing it. What we are confronted with are originals, isolated within two slices of glass.

In spite of the size of the glasses this kind of presentation reminds us spectating to things, we know within a different context. Under the microscope, between transparent carriers, tiny cuttings from life or death are accessible for the human eye. The hidden gets recognizable, knowable and controllable.

With presenting STIFFENSTUFF Schmidt opens the heart of DIE HERDE and shows the bare view onto pure frozen moments in high solution. The works contain a huge amount of beauty but also mystery. And the truth is - a secret to be given away - that in fact wax and ice never get in touch with each other. The moment shown never happened.

Axel T Schmidt was born 1959. He lives and works in Bavaria near Weiden / Upper Palatinate. An illustrated booklet with the text of Heiner Reber will accompany the exhibition.