



Hicham Berrada

Les Fleurs

Opening: 16 September 2016, 6 – 9 pm

Exhibition: 17 September —30 October 2016

Hicham Berrada's videos, installations and objects often make the phenomena of nature as their own, or they form processes from natural scientific experiments. Berrada imitates, in the spaces he designs, conditions of nature and then moves them from their original context into the exhibition space. The conceptual art strategy of context displacement often resembles the scientific experimental setup. His exhibits are neither a complete reinterpretation like the Ready-Made, nor do they create an accurate reconstruction of natural conditions, such as an experiment in a laboratory would require. Berrada operates between the two and relies on an aesthetic and poetic potential of the experiment, which is entirely free and unexpected.

In a purpose built structure at the Wenttrup gallery last year, the night thriving Jasmine exuded its scent during normal opening times – while the space itself remained dark. At night, however, the flowers bathed in artificial light – Berrada trained the Jasmine to have a new daily rhythm. For his new exhibition, he shows video works that again have flowers and blossoms as a theme. In "Les fleurs" one sees with high-speed cameras formations that are reminiscent of a basket-inflorescence, as we know from poppy or sunflower. However, Berrada's flowers are completely inorganic and consist of a few centimeters wide array of iron particles in a liquid, which form a magnetic field. For less than a second, a jet of air moves through this field – so fast that its impact on the human eye would not be perceptible. In the slow motion of the high-speed camera, this fraction of a second is stretched to nearly two minutes. Now revealed, hundreds of small gray hills begin moving, continuously forming new shapes, dividing into tiny bubbles of liquid iron that disintegrate, immediately readjusting and undulating in waves back to a perfect, uniform shape.

As a prelude to his videos, Berrada quotes Swedish poet August Strindberg's work "inferno, legnden" (1897), where he found flowers to be an admirable being of stoicism. While Strindberg experimented with chemistry during that time, flowers became metaphors for suffering and



endurance that replicate without fighting and vanish without complaining. It turns out that those capabilities of nature, which simulates Berrada in his videos can also be understood as an anthropological analogy. How would a crowd react under similar conditions? How would humane structures regroup when they are changed by external influences?

This is particularly true because, for Berrada, Max Ernst's frottage considerations were central to 'Les Fleurs'. Ernst's first and most extensive frottage cycle, "Histoire Naturelle" or memories from "Beyond painting", describe in an impressive way how physical surface structures of nature doubled can suddenly develop into superimposed towering landscapes and act like "symptoms of half asleep". And indeed Berrada's videos seem close to surrealist ideas when suddenly a flower emerges from a liquid that dissolves in a storm, and then finds its way back to its original shape. Ernst was once described on the occasion of his retrospective at the National Gallery in Berlin as "Magician of imperceptible displacements". Berrada, in turn, makes the barely visible movements of a flower magnet a pretty surreal experience.