

REVIEWS

quick to remind us of the not exactly lofty physical necessities of our bodies. What an absurdity—one short circuit that pointed to another, that of Conceptual art and painting when they are played off against one another. Good painting can't do without concepts. In reminding us of this, Olesen remained true to his conceptual orientation as a painter for whom what actually matters is painting.

—Noemi Smolik

Translated from German by Alexander Scrimgeour.

MALMÖ, SWEDEN

Luca Frei

MALMÖ KONSTHALL

When Simone Forti's *See-Saw*, 1960, was to be shown at Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 2015, Luca Frei was commissioned to restage it. This remake of Forti's iconic sculpture and performance piece—also included in Frei's recent solo exhibition at Malmö Konsthall, "From day to day"—offered compelling evidence that the younger artist sees himself as not only a contemporary conduit for the modernist and Minimalist tradition, but also its successor and developer. Many of the more than thirty pieces in the Malmö exhibition took on a double function similar to that of Forti's work, operating as attractive working design objects as well as interactive installations. They exuded both avant-garde functionalism and a sense of the postwar artist navigating the expanded field, in which, as philosopher Richard Wollheim put in his famous essay on Minimalism, "the elements of decision or dismantling acquire a new prominence."

Frei has a gusto for colorful and asymmetric architectural support structures, and it played well with the geometric rigidity of Klas Anshelm's early-1970s kunsthalle architecture. The exhibition's non-linear montage showed the manifold of a dynamic hands-on practice inseparable from the joys, troubles, and proposals of an artist rooted in a functionalist tradition beginning with the German Bauhaus experiments of the 1920s and continuing into North American 1960s Minimalist dance. The key installation in the exhibition was a work, combining

Luca Frei, *Model for a Pedagogical Vehicle*, 2018, powder-coated steel, fabric, digital prints on PVC, paper objects. Installation view, 2020.



sculpture and a mobile display structure, titled *Model for a Pedagogical Vehicle*, 2018. This huge clothing-rack-like construction takes inspiration from the 1931 Tokyo exhibition "Seikatsu Kosei Tenrankai" (Exhibition of Life Construction), which introduced Bauhaus to Japan, as well as from the influential cross-disciplinary 1950s design collective Jikken Kōbō (Experimental Workshop). In Malmö, the piece served as a magical entry point into the exhibition and what I took to be at the core of Frei's work—namely, a reintroduction of a quaint mix of avant-garde and Minimalist methods.

In *Circular arrangement for sitting, standing, and dancing*, 2019, eight colorful stools in different geometric forms appeared to invite visitors to play. The designs were adapted from a standardizing drawing tool, developed in the 1920s, with a set of formats made for industrial use. Frei's adaptations are not for sitting on, however, but are only to look at, as if they were some expensive leftover works from 1960s performance pieces, perhaps by some forgotten neo-Dada friend of Forti's.

Frei's exhibition repeatedly evinced the power of history to lead to a new work. *Inheritance*, 2013, was based on a large collection of photos the artist received after the death of his father, a professional photographer, in 2012. A frieze of rephotographed sheets from the binders in which the negatives were stored was hung at knee level below a seemingly random selection of everyday images, presented at eye level. Here, Frei treats his own family history with the same curiosity and revisionism as he does the European modernists in a piece such as *Workstation (For Marianne Brandt)*, 2019, derived from the table used by the Bauhaus designer in a 1923 photograph but also potentially a tool for making something new. The poster *Everything was to be done. All the adventures are still there*, 2003, combines a historical black-and-white photo of a parking lot on place Beaubourg in Paris, the future site of the Centre Pompidou, with a quotation from artist and writer Kodwo Eshun. Unlike the other works in the show and contrary to its own title, the work seems to refuse a place in the present.

If the relation to utopia is at the core of the aesthetic forms and artistic strategies of Frei's practice, his work can seem a painfully melancholic elegy to a lost cause. But if the ideological heart of his practice rather has to do with a much more pragmatic notion of cultivating history, studying, and learning through art, then he may be onto something. By working *with* and *in* the tradition, with all its problems, but without getting trapped in institutional critique, the exhibition avoided nostalgia. The beauty of Frei's work lies in an almost prosaic appreciation for an everyday search for the utopias of formal functions, eschewing dominant periodizations of contemporary art.

—Fredrik Svensk

SANTA CRUZ DE TENERIFE, SPAIN

"El sauce ve de cabeza la imagen de la garza"

TEA TENERIFE ESPACIO DE LAS ARTES

"Utopias, which incidentally are a European invention, are almost invariably settler colonies. Achieving utopia involves going to a place where other people already live and displacing them," says Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa in her video *Promised Lands*, 2015–18. She is one of the twenty-eight artists included in "El sauce ve de cabeza la imagen de la garza" (The Willow Sees the Heron's Image Upside Down), curated by Catalina Lozano. (The show's poetic title is taken from a haiku by Bashō by way of Chris Marker's 1983 film *Sans Soleil*.)

In *Isla*, 2009, a video by Gilda Mantilla and Raimond Chaves, the silhouette of an island gradually materializes and blurs on a foggy