

Leslie

Max Frey – Espuma

Opening: 15.09.17

Exhibition: 16.09.17-06.10.17

A foam cannon shoots white foam into the gallery space. The foam covers the floor, piles up, flies through the air and sticks to the walls.

FOAM is a mass of tiny gaseous bubbles. Surfactants, which have a water-loving and a water-repellent end, organise themselves on contact with water so that the hydrophobic side does not come into contact with the water. Foam bubbles are created, protected by fragile fluid walls which also separate them from one another – walls whose existence is only temporary. Gravity slowly pulls the liquid between the bubbles downwards, so that the walls become ever thinner until they ultimately collapse.

The foam – this continually growing mass which in turn is already folding in on itself – increasingly takes over the gallery space. Visitors can only look on from the outside through the large gallery window as the foamy mass moves within the gallery space, expands, disintegrates, seeps under the door crack and slowly makes its way into the outside world.

Max Frey's works often bring to mind laboratory experiments. The materials and set-up of his experiments however are very minimal and seemingly simple. As indeed here: a barrel with soapy solution, a foam cannon with a nozzle and meshing, and the gallery space. At first glance, one is not sure if there is any artistic intention at all. Has there been an accident? Has something gone out of control? A closer look reveals however, a surprising transformation. Something emerges from the rudimentary set-up, the supposed accident, something which is surprising, confusing, absorbing, perhaps a poetic moment. A slightly sinister feeling may even creep over you as the foam becomes an autonomous creature.

It is, as Michael Schwarz aptly put it when describing the 2012 work „Großen Klappe“, the disposition of the viewer which determines the interpretation¹. Max Frey's works are performative at a fundamental level. Things and objects are set in motion by the artist, but it is only on their reception that a narrative emerges. A possible – but not compulsory – association is the term „Espuma“ from the title of the show. The Spanish word for foam reminds the culinarily inclined viewer of the appetizing foam from molecular cuisine. Equally, it can simply evoke the memory of soapy bubbles, which we observed as children in the bath and wondered what would happen if the foam just kept growing... .

The foam disintegrates and ultimately becomes a fluid soapy solution once again. The work exists only in a fleeting moment. For Frey the object too is radically performative. It is a mass but at the same time unstable: it is the chemico-physical process of foam.

Julia Connert

1 cf.: Michael Schwarz, Transformation von Material und Licht im Werk von Max Frey