

Rémy Markowitsch, **Black Swan (Mother's Finest)**

The composition is quite unexpected -hence typical for Rémy Markowitsch's work - his calling two objects in the form of stuffed lambs „Black Swan“. This title puts the whole thing in a nutshell.

The „Black Swan Theory“ of Nassim Nicholas Taleb (which must not be confused with the „black swan problem“) describes a quite unexpected, hardly predictable, rare occurrence - which lies outside our normal experience. In his book „The Black Swan“ published 2007 Taleb describes all big inventions and diverse historical occurrences such as the first World War, the attack of 9/11, the development of the computer, and the genesis of the internet as Black Swan Events. This term dates back to the fact that, until the discovery of Australian black swans in the 18th century, all swans ever conceived of in Europe had to be white. „Black Swan“ is an oxymoron, which underwent a change and was overtaken by reality. In his book Taleb refers to the vulnerability of our financial systems to Black Swan events, he hereby goes on to discount a part of our current economic reality. He does not outline ways to avoid such events, but recommends looking at them from different points of view. He recounts - and that is what black swan events have in common with life - that it only depends on the observer's eye whether an event is seen as negative or positive. (This describes Christoph Schlingensiefel's watchword: „Failure as Opportunity“).

The lambs in Markowitsch's work experienced the occurrence of two consecutive black swan events. In fact they are Persian lambs that is Karakul sheep a few hours or a few days old, which had to die to become part of a Persian lamb coat. From the point of view of the unborn lamb this event is hardly predictable, if we remember that, biologically, the maintaining of the species in Russia, or the leaping in Namibia, the grazing in Buchara, or harvesting in Afghanistan are far closer to what can be regarded as normal events than a premature birth caused by outer circumstances, followed by slaughter, the processing of its skin (together with that of numerous others) into Persian lamb coats for ladies who usually do not even live in cold climates. Such a Persian lamb coat, formerly family property, ended up in Markowitsch's studio and hung around in a cupboard (a black swan for a coat?) before the second, quite unforeseen event happened.

Markowitsch decided to submit the fur coat to a transformation from cultivated object close to a natural state. He handed the coat to a taxidermist who covered two ordinary plastic models of lambs with the fur and added artificial eyes and hooves to make them „true to life“. One of the stuffed lambs has the skin with the leather-side turned outwards, so that a kind of Golem results, which points to the fabrication of the object as much as to the skill of the furrier. So it is that the foetus of the Karakul sheep experiences some years later its second „Black Swan Event“ which is much rarer and more improbable than the first.



Black Swan (Mother's Finest)
I & II, 2009
Mixed media, 53 x 44 x 15 cm

Stuffed animals play a role in Markowitsch's work as for example in the modernist hut „Barley“ dated 2004 in which the book recounting the origin of the hut, entitled „The Innocent Anthropologist: Notes from a Mud Hut „ by Nigel Barley is held up at all four corners by chicken-claws. Or the photo-series „AesopScans“ (1995) for which Markowitsch put stuffed animals through x-ray machines such as are used in airport security areas. More important for the understanding of „Black Swan“ are works, which deal with the complex „Nature vs. Culture“ and thereby work out a clear reference to economics. In „Onion Options“ (2008) and „Bullish on Bulbs“ (2007) Markowitsch is concerned with options-trading and economic compositions, in regard to the enormous value of the tulip in Persia, China and Europe and the first stock-exchange crash caused by tulip production in Holland in 1637. Similarly the common onion, the price of which in India directly influences the political opinion of the masses. There is also a close relation between „Black Swan“ and the video work „Miu Miu! Strip! Strip!“ and the object „Miumiubull“ (both 2008). For these Markowitsch had a shoemaker re-work a pair of his luxury brand shoes „Miu Miu“ into the form of a bull's head. These works illustrate a special sharpness and precision due to the fact that the aspect of value-creation is part of the very subject - like designer shoes and fur coats. In the artists' composition they are subject to a cultural transformation, which plays with the idea of reinstating „nature“. Yet by entering the sphere of high culture the works become the object of new economic contracts.

From the point of view of the lamb it must remain a big secret that the Black Swan Event is connected in this way to the „bursting of the bubble“ on the art market.

Kathrin Becker

Translation from the German by Shirley Schroeder



AesopScans (1995)
Swan (131x200 cm)



AesopScans (1995)
Wolf (131x200 cm)



Finger im Buch(1996)
Rémy Markowitsch



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