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A REVIEW OF MUNICH JEWELRY WEEK 2016 – PART I

BY THE 2ND YEAR ALCHIMIA MFA STUDENTS

Alchimia's second year MFA team of students visited Schmuck 2016 with its curatorial studies tutor Antonia Alampi. They spent their time analyzing and closely discussing a select number of exhibitions among the more than 70 organized for this year's event.

Our team of *experts* has been asked to act as critics: by reviewing an exhibition from the perspective of its infrastructure, by tracing and discussing parallels between exhibitions, or by tracing parallels and discussing this year's jewelry week in relation to previous ones.

With the participation of Carla Movia, Lumy Noguez, and Chumeng Weng.

Check out our blog for next week's Part II.

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LUMY NOGUEZ

I've selected three exhibitions that have particularly interested me from different perspectives.

Hibernate – Helena Lehtinen, Eija Mustonen and Tarja Tuupanen

Beautifully made, featuring exceptional pieces in terms of technique, with a very straightforward display: each work had next to it the pages of a book focusing both on the piece itself and on the exhibition as a whole, sewing together the different elements. Even though it was a group show you could experience the strength of the individual practices by having in depth information about each one of them. The display was simple but tasteful and it related well to the show above by Ketli Tiitsar & Kristi Paap, with the organizers and artists being particularly warm and generous in responding to questions or clearing out doubts.



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Hibernate, photo by Lumy Noguez

By *Royal Appointment* – The Dialogue collective

This group really curated every detail! They transformed or created furniture in a cheap, but striking way. They thought about themselves as part of the exhibition, dressing up and performing in it, and had a thorough explanation about each artistic approach, and their display stratagems were always personal, but also relating well to the overall group decisions. The mode of (free) distribution they found via the use of funny brochures/pins was ingenious. The only weak point I found were the pieces themselves! Which I believe is one of the most important aspects. I had the impression that some of them focused a lot on making a good exhibition, but ultimately didn't develop their own pieces as much. I think that all elements should be balanced, because what is the point of making a great and complete display when the quality of the pieces is missing and the exhibition ends up swallowing up your own work? Unless of course your intention is making of the exhibition itself a piece, but then it is necessary to make sure that the public understands that. This highlights the difficulty of being the artist and the curator of your own show.



By *Royal Appointment*, all photos by Lumy Noguez



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Unbearable lightness – Federica Sala

This exhibition, more than anything else, was an inspiration for me. It was great to see this place completely transformed since last year. Even though the place is very characterized, it was conceptually related to the pieces. The light and the rough tables highlighted the elegant and striking contrast and tension that the works are all about. The artist did a good job in advertising her work inside and outside of the exhibition space, and in realizing “valuable” and “affordable” versions for everything so as to address and target different audiences. Such as the two versions of the book, or by realizing edition pieces (that were successfully very quickly sold) in addition to the more expensive ones.



Unbearable Lightness, all photos by Lumy Nogues



CHUMENG WENG

The exhibition (IM)PRINT left some imprints on me. It took place in easy!upstream, a project space that is clean, quiet and elongated. It featured twelve artists, which is a lot of people, with different cultural and educational backgrounds. The exhibition discussed the act of leaving an imprint on something in life, through different medias. The artists' individual works remained autonomous and undisturbed by each other thanks to the dimension, but also the coherent use, of the white exhibition space. The works presented were extremely diverse: books, posters, prints, videos etc, all sorts of expressions that are usually not attached to conventional ideas about jewelry, all tied by the same topic, imprint. Of course there were artists that use jewelry as a medium (e.g. Nils Hint's forged iron cut out and David Clarke's pewter cutlery), interestingly

and perfectly relating to the overall theme.

A work by Japanese artist Yuka Oyama closed the exhibition, “Helmet – River” a performance film in which a group of collectives wearing white coveralls and helmets paint a carpet sized canvas together, a video-installation without any apparent relation to jewelry. The effect was ambiguous, and I find it too ambitious to expect the audience to be able to trace a connection between the film and the rest of the exhibition, without any linguistic or visual explanation of it. Whether intentional or not, the video had been set up in the back of the space at a converging point – a possible good conclusion, if my mind hadn’t just been too exhausted from looking into the details of all the other pieces. But details is what jewelry is about...

(IM)PRINT is one of the few exhibitions that triggered my curiosity about the artists and the idea behind each piece. Most of them were extremely legible, however it would have been an added value if there were some knowledge shared about the artist and the circumstances that inspired him/her in creating the works. Ironically, little information was presented not for conceptual purposes, but due to a lack of preparation. On the other hand if there were explanations about everything it would have taken forever to read through the exhibition. An alternative could always be to select fewer artists.

I found this information lacking also in many other exhibitions. I felt like everyone was trying to be ‘conceptual’ by hiding their statements. Whereas when there were people explaining the ideas behind the works, the quality of the pieces seemed to not be as interesting as their concepts. I found students’ works being more conservative in comparison to last year’s MJW, with the exception of the exhibition by the students of the Central Saint Martins at Vitsœ Munich, titled “Shelf-Life”. The exhibition space was beautifully utilized and the pieces were interesting. The handout was an empty book cover, a quite original idea working well with the exhibition.

The auction was something new this year. It is a nice idea to provide an alternative to galleries and to bring in different ways of selling works or bringing in a diverse audience to the scene, even though most bidders seemed still to come from the same contemporary jewelry bubble. Adversely, an auction really needs more professional auctioneers, more viewable display systems for the pieces and a better conclusion for the audience – in general, a better organization.



(IM)PRINT, photo by Chumeng Weng

CARLA MOVIA

The exhibition *Hibernate*, located in the basement of the 84ghz building, for me was a great example of a capturing and coherent show. *Hibernate* is not only the name of the book, but also the name of the collective formed by Helena Lehtinen, Eija Mustonen, and Tarja Tuupanen, three Finnish jewelry artists who have been working together since 1999. The exhibition itself was only part of the event as its book-launch was actually its real purpose, a quite nice inversion of trajectory.

The space, with its silence and “emptiness”, immersed me in a special mood immediately upon arrival. The first thing you could see was a pile of books with a plain white cover, which immediately struck my curiosity. Images of landscapes, jewelry pieces, landscapes and pieces, all somehow subtle and quiet, populate the books’ pages; I could understand the jewelry pieces just by looking at these images, with their magic and peace. The book depicts the work of the three

artists and their surroundings, what Helena, Eija and Tarja see and live everyday. I bought the book to continue my journey through the show.

The second room was the exhibition space. It was darkened; the only source of light being a line of plain light bulbs placed on a narrow white table on which the pieces and the open books were laid. Once again, even in the space of the exhibition, the images completed the pieces and vice versa. Walking through the space, while looking at the pieces, I felt the same peace and quietness that the book evoked just a few minutes earlier. There were objects and jewelry, both made by very contrasting materials, but still speaking the same language. The strength of metal talked to the fragility of the thin chalkboards, black and white talked to colors, creating a harmonious dialogical atmosphere.

After going through the whole exhibition Eija, one of the artists, approached us explaining what the exhibition and their collective are about. Once again, everything she was depicting was retracable in the book, display and pieces. Her explanation was the closure to a pleasant and fascinating exhibition.



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