

## Annette Ruenzler

Galerie Kamm, Berlin, Germany

At first, Annette Ruenzler's second solo show at Berlin's Galerie Kamm seems enigmatic. The press release explains that the show's French title, 'Faire la bise' (Air Kissing) exemplifies an exhibition in which sculptural and photographic works 'teeter between presence and absence'. This ambiguity is indeed true of an air kiss, the phenomenon so widespread in Basel in June, and in Miami in December; but it is not true of Ruenzler's exhibition, which is as definite as a kiss on the lips. Definite, though, nevertheless entails a whole set of meanings, each of which can occur in different ways. Definition, in other words, does not enforce singularity.

Perhaps most present of all is Ruenzler's installation in the gallery's main space (*Untitled*, all works 2013), where transparent cut glasses of various designs and sizes, from goblets to a water jug, are spread out on the floor. Hanging from the ceiling above them are electrical cords ending in light bulbs, each of which hangs just inside a corresponding cut glass container. The effect is one of many small chandeliers, which throw their patterned shadows on the floor rather than the ceiling. When people move amongst these hanging bulbs, disturbances in the air cause movement among the cords, and hence create an animation of light patterns on the floor. Ruenzler herself describes her works as having a poetic moment. It's something to return to.

Three works occupy the entrance to the gallery, acting as a prelude to the cut glass installation. A shelf with three beautifully malformed white ceramic vases is simply called *kleine Gruppe* (Small Group). A slim mirror set against the wall behind the vases, so that we can see the reverse side of the piece, contradicts the modesty of the arrangement. Though it initially seems formally superfluous, this mirroring is essential to the piece, ensuring that the viewer engages with the three-dimensionality of the vases, and with their specific deformities. It is, as with the installation of light bulbs and cut glasses, very simple and very intentional. Perhaps this is what Ruenzler meant by 'a poetic moment'; for a poem, of whatever type, relies absolutely on clear intention and delivery.

Below the *Kleine Gruppe*, with obvious, even comic pathos, lies *Einzel 1.1*, a slightly squashed vase on a piece of wood on the floor (of the same sort used in the shelf). In the gallery office are more pieces in this series, all with the title *Einzel* (perhaps best translated as 'apart', or 'singular'), but with

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*kleine Gruppe*, 2012, ceramic, chalk, wood, mirror, 24 x 65 x 21 cm. Photograph: Jens Ziehe

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unique numbers assigned to them: thus 1.2, 1.3, and so on. The numerical identification of these pieces is a common syntax in contemporary art. Set against this the fact that as art collecting started in earnest in ancient Europe, fine vases were amongst the first high value objects to be exchanged. The vases here represent such valuable objects, things to be identified, traded and collected and catalogued; at the same time as they are indicated as objects to which a disproportionate value is deliberately attached. They are a shorthand for art objects, as well as being art objects. It is a consciously self-fulfilling argument, and in its reflexivity on commodification, a droll piece of circular poetry.

The third work in the entranceway is a framed photographic print, *Lucky Star*, which shows what looks like the shadow of a leaf taken as it floated in an outdoor swimming pool. The indistinct and refracted form of the leaf shadow is set against the grid of grouting at the bottom of the pool. At the edges of the shadow are several bright points, star-like. There is existential poetry in any photograph, as pointed out so lyrically by Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida* (1980). And as in any poetry, it is again all about intention and delivery. To capture points of refracted light around the edges of a leaf might initially seem accidental or ephemeral: but it's not, not any more than the big bang is ephemeral, not any more than taking a photograph is an accidental or enigmatic act. There is poetry in Ruenzler's exhibition, but it is not indistinct, or ambiguous, ephemeral or accidental. Like cut glass, or water, it is clear. There is a physics to poetry, just as there is a poetry to physics.

**Matthew Burbidge**

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**Frieze**

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