

The Fossil Star
Mercedes Replinger

“We have lived too long in terror of the perfection of the Demiurge...which loved perfect, complicated materials, we prefer trash. We find it simply bewitching, we adore what is cheap, cobbled together, defective...such is our love of essential matter, for its sponginess and porosity, for its unique, mythical consistency....we love its creaking, its resistance, its mysterious deformity” (Bruno Schulz: *Treatise on the Tailor’s Dummy or the Second Book of Genesis*)

The artist as “flâneur” roams the city, unravelling mysteries, observing out-of-the-way corners, lingering to gaze at objects now despised and unwanted, rejected as old or faulty, broken-down, useless objects gifted, in their helplessness, with a poetic life absent from our well-kept homes. This flotsam casts a deep shadow on our memory, its forlornness tells a story of the disorderly and incomprehensible, of that which we prefer to leave beyond the pale of certainty. The activity of Susan Nash, is not, however, limited to rescuing these objects from their imminent fate as rubbish. With them she creates, in the best constructivist tradition, compositions of precise geometry such as the splendid *Four Points of the Compass at Table*, an almost suprematist composition on the underside of an old-fashioned round chipboard living-room table; or *Throne of Blood*, a coat-stand transformed into the setting for disturbing objects. In short, these are not collages, it is not a question of using the “found object” from the street as one more decorative element in a pictorial composition; the artist breaks away from the tradition of the “objet trouvé”, makes no attempt to rescue the fragment, to save it from its imminent and clamorous debacle, but rather to discover in it, whether door, window, or piece of wood, the exact geometry to which it belongs, the inevitable form to which it was predestined by its very nature as a forsaken and fortuitous object.

Indeed, the original function of the object is not at first apparent, seemingly hidden beneath the very language of painting, as in *Two Maps and a Landscape*, strips of wooden skirting board representing a strange territory, broken down and dissociated into depiction and cartography. Susan Nash does not attempt to save these objects from their fate, but to read their secret language, the defective – and thus contaminated - content which they offer up as the true artistic material. In fact, the true “found object” in these compositions is their geometry, and not the doors and windows, wardrobes and shelves collected in the street. In *Sputnik*, for example, the distribution of the forms, the composition of the work, are determined by the geometry of the kitchen counter rescued from the pavement. The idea is summed up perfectly in the title of another of these works, *The Door and its Inhabitants*, a geometric labyrinth on the inside of a door, and constructed according to its own logic, which the artist merely emphasizes by removing the panel that had covered it. Such is the surprising nature of this working method that, when the artist constructs her own supports, she appears to imitate objects found in the street, as in *Screen*, where the stretcher with wire mesh is reminiscent of a pantry door. Reversibility.

Susan Nash has said, “I enjoy working with found objects, cast-offs torn from their usual context. The finding is a question of affinity. I use them for my own purposes, but I try to preserve the past they carry with them, and I like to think that I allow them to become visible at last”. A visibility of the “found object” which acquires a new dimension in this exhibition designed for an art space that was originally a light bulb factory. As in her other works, the artist has sought to recover memories of a previous function; the space is illuminated, as by lightning, with an installation including a pyramid in red, blue and black, echoing the dominant colours of the other works, and leading the visitor into the space. A pyramid surrounded by sand and strange inscriptions, figures and messages; a symbolic summing up of the earlier function of the space, and relating to the four elements of air, fire, earth and water, which contribute to the existence of the light bulb. A transparent object generating light and heat, which is connected with earth, with the sand from which glass is made. A kind of fossil found in the city, an urban fossil, to be precise. It may be remembered that the surrealists maintained they roamed the streets in order to practise the “botany of the asphalt”.