

OLAF HOLZAPFEL



Lichtbild Leinen Blau / Linen Blue Photo (2014)
Hay, Wire, Ash, Pigment, 130 x 120 x 25 cm
Courtesy of Daniel Marzona

Olaf Holzapfel, born in Dresden in 1967, is an artist from a country that no longer exists. His coming-of-age involved crossing a border between the East-West divide of the Cold War era that - until the current outbreak of war in Ukraine - was becoming a distant memory. Holzapfel has long been interested in boundaries, demarcations, and frontiers - or, more precisely, in interstitial spaces, what is possible *in between*. With Europe's anxiety surrounding its porous borders now central, sadly enough, to its paranoid sense of self, Holzapfel's work could not be more timely and more apt, choosing to shift his gaze to a frontier far from the eastern Mediterranean, namely in south-central Chile, the past site of a number of Holzapfel's projects; all of which have involved close cooperation with the local population and an elemental reliance on Indigenous traditions of building, constructing, and manufacturing.

The Perfect Path at Daniel Marzona:

“Holzapfel’s new pictures made of straw and cactus fibers describe the relationship between human and landscape; they translate space into surfaces. These are material pictures of the periphery – straw pictures from Lusatia and Brandenburg, chaguar plant fiber pictures from the dry forests of the Chaco in northern Argentina, pictures and folds of interconnected straw, line spaces in which light is refracted, reticulated woven textile pictures of cactus fibers colored with materials extracted from the plants in the environs. In them, traditional motifs are combined with contemporary compositions of paths, spirals, and fields to yield landscape-like pictorial spaces. Holzapfel’s works, created with ancient craft techniques, blur, within contemporary art, the strict separation of nature and culture. Are line spaces and networks exclusively contemporary terms of a digitalized, media world? Holzapfel’s dealings with living forms of crafts suggest that the contradiction between tradition and modernity can be viewed as a bygone construct, as mere appearance that glorifies landscape as an Arcadian subconscious. Instead, the artist is interested in landscape as a reservoir of its own media technology, with a presence of the approximate, of the recurring dimensions of plants, of the systematics of even inhospitable rural regions. He thereby counters a view of truth and reality shaped by theoretical conceptions with an action and the material that lead to a picture.

The spaces that are meanwhile virtually retrievable everywhere and at all times via GPS coordinates or actually as urban space are juxtaposed and compared with what we call nature, wilderness, or landscape to produce the disturbing fascination of his new works. Until now, nature was usually perceived as a depiction or a resource – whereby it produces its pictures in direct exchange with itself. Thus, Holzapfel’s pictures tell us something about our relationship to nature and landscape, about our relational being, about the similarity and comparability of modern and archaic, urban and rural models of spatial organization. They draw their beauty from their simultaneity – they originate *from the interior of the landscape* in which they are made, and the question arises whether these pictures of the periphery are not in reality the beginning of a new center and perhaps already inscribed in it, and whether the contradiction between wilderness and order, between nature and culture

actually exists or is only a theoretical construct that keeps us within the interior of a human egocentrism and blocks our view of their natural kinship.

The first chaguar pictures were created in collaboration with the northern Argentinian Indios, the Wichis, and were first exhibited in 2009 in Buenos Aires and then at the Venice Biennale 2011. Later, Holzapfel created additional individual pictures that can now be viewed as autonomous pictorial works. They provide examples of the ambiguity of seemingly fixed categories of a modernity enclosed within itself and prepared for random access. For it remains simply unclear whether their theme is determined by a recollection of the Bauhaus, by digital designs, or by the technique and craft of the Indios. Holzapfel's artistic practice thus proves once more to be shaped by a nomadic, alternative thinking that includes the fissure and that brings contraries together to advance to new shores."

[Daniel Marzona]

BIO

Olaf Holzapfel (born in Dresden, 1967) is a German contemporary artist. First featured in *Ausgesucht von Thomas Scheibitz* at Koch und Kessler in Berlin in 2003, his work is particularly well-known in Germany, Belgium and Switzerland, having been exhibited with Eberhard Havekost and Frank Nitsche. He was notably featured in the 54th Biennale di Venezia (2011) and in *documenta14* (2017).