

Sophie Schmidt: Show me your fingers, these radicchio claws with knives and forks for them
On occasion of Sophie Schmidt's residency at Taipei Artist Village

Sophie Schmidt's commitment to performance is ever present in her entire artistic practice. We find traces of former performances in her collages. Texts she has written, poetic in their unique way, spoken out loud or being sung build bridges between drawings, paintings, and sculptures, she often calls prothesis. Words reappear, connect and add to the story that at one point started in one of the mediums that Sophie Schmidt masters in her practice. These narratives zoom in and out of time and space. They tell the story of San Gennaro, the saint patron of Naples, Italy, who lived in the 4th century, equally to those of the smallest insects and animals on the earth. Getting in touch with the performance work by Sophie Schmidt also means to connect the dots between these storylines. While the current situation in many societies today is propagating disparities in a community, Schmidt's approach is a manifesto against hierarchies. Just as the smallest insects have the same impact on Sophie Schmidt's artistic practice as a worshipped saint, her influences and starting points may be as ordinary as the beauty of a radicchio or the curves of a tomato.

One tool to mediate between these inspirations are Sophie Schmidt's prothesis. Build from everyday objects like strainers, sanitary products, eggs, or bandages, through Schmidt's practice of "activations" (as she calls some of her performances) she widens her body. The body is undergoing a transformation, or you might as well call it a reconstruction, to conquer boundaries between different forms of being. The prothesis "widens the body", becomes enhancement, extension or aid.

Following Donna Haraway's definition of cyborgs, disparities between different forms of being could be lifted if the limitations between mankind, machine, and animal were being dissolved.

During her performances Sophie Schmidt is moving into this new space of yet to be defined place of existing. This paramount idea gives way to an alternative outlook on societal and evaluation standards of judgment. What does it mean to be healthy/unhealthy, productive/unproductive, accessible/inaccessible? There lies brutality in existing as a living being. But Sophie Schmidt looks on all of that with an ever-present tenderness.

With her performances the artist is building a theater, for everybody, for nobody. She carries her opera, her theater with her. The body is stage, singer, costume, flesh, sound, choir, viewer, requisite.

Clara Stratmann, May 2021
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