

## Li Silberberg – *Seitenwende* (Lateral turn)

November 29, 2024 – January 18, 2025

Artist Talk (in German): Saturday, December 7, 3 pm

Reading by Li Silberberg – *Short Stories* (in German): Sunday, December 8, 3 pm

Li Silberberg had her first exhibition participation at Semjon Contemporary in the group exhibition *Penetrating Paper* in 2017. This was followed by another thematic exhibition, *Geschnitten & Gerieben* (*Cut and Rubbed*), in the Corona year 2020, which unfortunately had hardly any visitors due to the lockdown. Her room-filling installation *Bibliothek*, which was intended to serve as a spatial sketch for the installation sculpture *Bibliothek/Library*, was also on display there in the gallery's former *Street Salon*. Sometimes all it takes is one visitor or the 'right' person: in a glass cube (financed by a crowdfunding campaign and the artist's private sponsors), the installation artwork has now been on display in the Philological Library of Freie Universität for almost three years, materializing in form and structure an impressive and intelligent symbol of the library system. The work can still be seen there until the end of February 2025, and the search for a new temporary exhibition space - and the dialogical relationship to another library or museum/exhibition space that this entails - has long since begun.

In Li Silberberg's hands, paper becomes both a carrier of pictorial information and a handcrafted material for creating abstract, differentiated and very spatial landscapes. Layer upon layer of paper is superimposed on the next sheet of paper, which is kept to a certain size and worked on with ink and hands, in order to nevertheless allow a hint or reference to the underlying artifact, which is no longer or barely perceptible. The landscape expands into the space, breathes through the layers of paper and is loosely and airily fixed to the canvas support at just a few points. One could freely interpret this by saying that the inner images stored in our memory seek their shelter in the layers of paper, like an unseen archive of images.

The sheets vibrate and tremble as we pass by and enter into a relationship with the space (through their positioning on the wall and the corresponding breeze) or the passing viewer who has already visually explored the work of art

Her largest single work to date, called *Wasserbruch*, is fresh from the studio and, despite its size (220 x 220 cm), is astonishing in its extreme lightness. One could be forgiven for thinking that these are microscopic structures of something that solidify into a marble-like surface in their dynamic fluid movements. This impression is not uninvolved in the partial framework, which is defined by the narrow strips of paper added on the left-hand side, which also break up and rhythmize the overall picture at the top and bottom, and yet formally also suggests openness, as the 'picture border' (the painted paper strip as a frame) is missing on the right-hand side. The association of a southern European stone *pavimento* can arise, but does not have to. The work obviously forces us to lose ourselves in its beautiful details.

A series of untitled, smaller square formats (50 x 50 cm) is juxtaposed, which focuses on the circle as a fundamental form, unfolding it, cutting it open, twisting it, quartering it and - as is generally the case in her work - layering it on top of one another. The result is an exciting juxtaposition of circular images on square canvases, which at first glance are dominated by the black and white contrast of half or quarter circles in a strict arrangement to one another. It is only

at second glance that the delicacy of the intermediate stages of pulsating watercolor gray tones or the delicate torn edges of the sheets stacked one behind the other becomes enchanting. The occasional rubbing of the paper, the folds and creases created by hand pressure, which also materialize round (!), additionally shape and enliven the surfaces. I have already written a lot about the rubbing of the paper material in the reflections on the library. Whether in the artist's books or in the individual planned work of art: here too, contemplation, meditation is part of the genesis of the work, being with oneself, feeling oneself in the connection with the paper.

*Seitenwende (Lateral turn)*. The exhibition title unites images and writing by the doubly talented artist Li Silberberg. You can already look forward to her reading on November 9th. The author of these lines was recently able to experience her private rehearsal!

This closes a circle - which, by the way, is played around by early, almost sculptural wall objects from the 1990s, which are both image and object. They frame the unfolded artist's book, which unites the word and the image. *SCHWARZ BUNT ES* is what she calls it (*BLACK COLOR ED*).

This single book is a reference to her main work, the installation sculpture *Bibliothek/ Library*, which was created in 181 volumes (including 40 text books (!) with daily notations) in over 40,000 hours of daily work over a period of 23 years. A happy coming together for a public library!

It is a treasure that still needs to be unearthed, should the books one day be facsimiled and transcribed, and thus their unique texts find their way into the world, into the world's memory.

Semjon H. N. Semjon, Berlin, in November 2024