

# The Spatial Dimension

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In Vibeke Nørgaard Rønsbo's artistic expression, the spatial dimension is a central element. This holds good in more than one sense. Figuratively, the spatiality is found in the artistic openness, in which Vibeke seeks her inspiration, as well as in the mere design of the works. Therefore, the spatial dimension is characterised by great versatility in her mode of expression, and by her attempt to embrace a great spectre of problems that include the citizens, as a starting point for her artistic activity. In a more literal sense, the spatial dimension manifests in various sculptural works, as the installations and the projects, in a natural way, include – and have a certain interaction with – the room in which they are executed.

When bearing in mind that Vibeke, in her entire artistic activity, is eager to awake the spectator's interest of the basic, down-to-earth conditions that we are marked by, it is quite easy, in our meeting with the works, to sense the strength by means of which she succeeds in conveying her messages. The immediate past, namely that of our own and our parents' lived lives, brings back memories, and via Vibeke's artistic choices and adaption of the traces of life, we are invited to reflect. Many of the traces, whether they refer to practical doings (such as hand-written communication) or to worn-out articles for everyday use (old suitcases, bags, typewriters etc.) focus on the loss of utility value and quality that the development of society relentlessly passes on. Therefore, many of Vibeke's objects and sculptures can easily be understood as an indirect criticism of this development. This idea is indeed increased by the nostalgic melancholy of recognition, which many of the sculptures might stir up.

## **Concrete sculptures**

The biggest and most spectacular of Vibeke's sculptures are done in concrete as realistic casts of old trunks, suitcases and bags. There are large and small suitcases, gigbags, midwife bags and numerous school bags. The wealth of detail is impressive: locks, drawings and markings in the leather structure of the original objects appear so clearly that few, by way of introduction, will take the objects for being cast in concrete. Every single suitcase or bag is cast in quite a few copies, typically in a black/grey, red and white variant. Each object makes an independent sculpture, but predominantly, Vibeke has arranged them in groups of sculptures titled "Bag-age". In this way, they have functioned as art-of-installation at out-door exhibitions and public spaces titled "Bag-age". (among other places in the airports of Billund, Århus and Ålborg).

The same accuracy in the design and wealth of detail is present in a group of small concrete casts reflecting the originals of an old milkman's bag, small oblong visit bags and old camera bags. These casts all constitute independent sculptures not intended for a certain context.

## **Bronze sculptures**

Vibeke has also, to a large extent, produced casts in bronze of used and slightly obsolete articles for everyday use. Well-known items such as purses, cell phones, cameras and half-empty tubes are original sources for a long and continuous series of small unique sculptures. All of them are executed with a large wealth of detail and a slightly absurd twist. The mere experience of purely functional devices and objects such as a camera or a soft purse of skin being produced in massive bronze is an absurdity in itself. When, at the same time, the sculpture is executed aesthetically and well-composed, it is no longer merely a peculiar lifelike object, but a genuine work of art.

The same applies for the cases in which Vibeke cannot help supplying the original item with a specific meaning of contents, so the completed bronze sculptures are conceived of as much more than elementary casts of existing items. An example of this is when she lets a purse stick out with nails, so it reminds you of a hedgehog, and humourously titles it "*Strapped for cash*".

In "Tube dialogues", a series of small bronze sculptures based on original half-empty tubes – with and without caps, Vibeke humorously gives the figures individual expressions. By squeezing and wringing the tubes lightly, as we do in our everyday lives, the tubes do not only appear as relics of lived lives, but form a sort of new "social lives" when organized in small groups. The effect of this is that most spectators see the sculptures as short "narratives". In any case, it is obvious to see them as human figures interacting with one another.

Thus, Vibeke, sublimely, succeeds in activating the spectator's imagination, simply by applying some techniques of form, allowing numerous sculptural variations, without the narrative's getting unambiguous at any time.

A specific group of Vibeke's bronze sculptures are done as casts of crumbled up and bended pieces of cardboard. These are pure abstractions without signifying any symbolic value. These small bronzes can be characterized as sculptural experiments with a clear focus on esthetic as well as compositional qualities.

## **Modelled sculptures**

One of Vibeke's many areas of fascination by the immediate past explores machines and devices contributing to practical relief and entertainment in a family's weekday about the middle of the 20th century. Some of these technical devices have been the starting point for a fine series of Indian ink drawings. These have

also been the source of some of Vibeke's latest sculptural representations of a modelled film projector, a typewriter and a sewing machine. Technically speaking, they are modelled out of numerous closely squeezed lumps of clay, which leaves a course-grained look despite the smoothly burnished surfaces.

This does not only strongly contrast with the refined representations and degree of detail in the bronze and the concrete casts, they also strongly contrast the original source. The absurdity of seeing the technical refinements and design of the functional original machines converted to a 'dead' ceramic material seems violent, and appears as an effectful comment on something - once meaningful, but now passé.

Vibeke has also created quite a number of partly abstract representations of human beings modelled in the same ceramic material and with the same technique of modelling.

### **Sculptural objects**

The spatial expression, however, is not limited to classical sculptures and techniques. Vibeke masters of almost every sort of material as long as it contributes to underlining or increasing the value of experience of the basic idea of the work. Two different installation objects, for example, are made of photo-printed sheets of paper, stitched together to duvets. The work "Miss Seventeen's Home" is a sort of anthropological snapshot of a weekday state of a teenage girl's room. In this work, accumulations of belongings such as laundry, books, videos, knick-knacks, photos etc. are reproduced in photocopies on the bed linen. The other work "Dreaming" is made in the same patchwork-like technique and reproduces the sleeping teenage-girl on the 'bed-linen'. Even if both works have a certain resemblance with real duvets at first sight, one immediately senses that something surreal is at stake. The black and white photo prints provide a ghostly element to the work, something that partly moderates its private nature and partly enters into a dialogue with the spectator's latent voyeurism.

A third installation, done in blank white Japan paper, Vibeke titles "Afvist" ("Rejected"). It consists of fragile and almost transparent fragments of suitcases and bags. The fragments are scattered all over a white paper carpet that is 10 metres long and 1 metre wide. Immediately, the spectator gets the feeling of insecurity. At first sight, one realizes that it will never be possible to know "who" or "what" has been rejected. The fragments merge into the carpet as if they were created in one piece. You wonder whether they are sinking into the carpet, or whether they are floating on the surface of it? Do the fragments represent luggage left behind, confiscated, discarded, or thrown away? – and in that case – to whom do they belong? As always, the possibilities are many if you want to join in the game. This installation is also found in a more solid outdoor version. In this, the fragments, now done in red concrete, lie scattered all over the ground or lawn. This version of the installation is not one big object like "Afvist", so the effect and the symbolic value might also be different.

A particular group of Vibeke's spatial objects consist of montres of acrylic glass hung up on the wall. They are formed like hives in various sizes. The largest ones measure about 32 x 32 x 22 cm. In the middle of each montre, a single bird feather is suspended leaving a dark shadow upon the white plating of the montre. On close inspection, it appears that the shadow is drawn by lines of a sentence constituting a short text – a poem.

The 'montre works' literally expose a feeling of poetical lightness, which normally gains distinction by being immaterial – again a paradox appealing to the spectator's sensibility and curiosity.

The phenomenon, poetical lightness, also characterizes the spatial installation "Web". This consists of a number of tubes hanging down, vertically, from the ceiling. The tubes are knitted in a thin copper thread and look like webs. They might give traces of traps hung out to dry, or of irregularly formed logs. The webs, which are almost 3 metres long, are hung up without a visible attachment to either ceiling or floor. All of them are pierced by thin black sticks of acrylic functioning to keep the webs in balance. In this floating wood of glistening, golden brown webs, you can go exploring among the 'logs' and the effects of shadows, which they bring about in the room.

Items and materials placed in contexts outside their original function and cultural significance are challenging in terms of creativity. This is why assemblage "sculptures made of bits and scraps" can be very fascinating. They call for us to see things in a new light. Vibeke has created quite a number of those works in which the single parts originally had another function, and where lived life is primarily seen in the wear and tear and the patina of the items. An excellent example of this is the wall object "Rulletekster" ("Crawling titles"). It consists of a 2.5 cm thick plate made of flat iron hanging down from the wall vertically. It measures 130 x 4 cm and it is pierced with 51 holes. In 46 of these holes, a number of rolled up book pages are attached on both sides of the iron plate, each with the length of 13 cm. The text rolls stick out regularly and symmetrically like light fishbones. In this extraordinary combination of materials: rusty iron and paper, the items gain new life – the result is a beautiful, aesthetic, well-balanced wall sculpture.

Vibeke always works passionately as well as consciously experimental with symbolic value in her art. Exactly by letting her gift of allowing the aesthetic quality in the proportioning of the spatial compositions be decisive for her final result, her works contribute a specific artistic quality, which succeeds extensively in awakening the spectator's fascination.