

## **Elfi Kreis: An Expedition into the Insect Kingdom (EN)**

### **Adventure into the Unknown, on the Trail of Drawing**

It is their capacity for amazement that artists and researchers have in common. The first engineer to succeed in building a helicopter with only one rotor blade was called Igor Sikorsky. He had a sign hanging up his factory, visible from some distance away, which read: "All recognised laws regarding the mechanics of flight indicate that the bumble bee will be unable to fly, due to its shape and weight in proportion to the surface area of its wings. But the bumble bee doesn't know that - so it simply flies". The inexhaustible wealth of imagination demonstrated by nature is a constant source of fascination - not only to engineers and scientists.

And it is the world of insects that lends wings to Ursula Goeb's artistic imagination time and time again. In particular, this species' characteristic ability to transform and metamorphose serves as a source of inspiration. Images of the concrete world represent no more than a starting point for the artist; the first kindling of enthusiasm. Ursula Goeb views them as a "motor that sets me in motion".

These manifestations from her insectarium, in brush drawings, do not seem to be examples of fauna we can identify with any certainty. On the contrary, they are bio-morph pictorial compositions transposed into the floating, dancing harmony of primarily black or at least dark basic forms.

The artist develops her cosmos of micro- and macro-structures using a wide range of mixed techniques - from delicate, glazed egg tempera to compact acrylic painting, from drawing in dark graphite and charcoal to light chalk and pastels: these are pictures in predominantly sandy or earthen colours, with titles such as Insect or Battle of the Insects, Head, Feelers, Insect Wings, Animal Migration and - repeatedly - Metamorphosis. Here, one believes it is just possible to discern a feeler, or the multi-part leg of some hairy creepy-crawly. Elsewhere, there is the indication of a delicate wing propeller or of a compact body shape, repellent, as if covered in a defensive chitin shell. Other pictures even remind us, distantly, of a dissected insect, of a fly that has been shredded into its individual parts in the hands of a naughty little boy: visual codes of a sign language that juggles with ambiguity and openness, its fascination founded on suggestion.

On orange-coloured graph paper, the artist has produced a series of drawings in graphite and oil chalks; in these, the flow of concentric lines airily surrounds her insect-like creatures and simultaneously conjures up apparently futuristic, architecture-like spatial contexts for them. In other places, delicate, nervous graphite lines are concentrated into a shimmering net-cocoon made up of filigree drawing.

Ursula Goeb's new works on paper, fresh from the studio, have attained a high level of abstraction. The artist assigns a central role to the playful aspect of chance; to the poetry of the intuitive working process. To do so, she produces ink drawings on tracing paper, which she folds; afterwards, the forms on the two transparent halves of the sheet appear in overlapping pairs.

The word insect comes from the Latin "insecta" and means "to cut into". Insects owe their name to the striking division of their bodies. The artist takes this term literally, lending it a double "cutting" significance. In collage pictures that Ursula Goeb constructs from pieces either cut with scissors or torn from already completed brush drawings, she combines the organic and the tectonic to attain additional relief-like, haptic, directly tangible effects. Few other methods could be more suited to the topic of metamorphosis than the collage technique: for it is an artistic method that sounds out the entire spectrum of possibilities for combination, thereby continually questioning already established, fixed meanings. The hand does the thinking. An artistic expedition leads into the unknown.

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Translation Dr. Lucinda Rennison, April 2006