

***light + air***

by Francesca Referza

Transparent cords intertwined and attached to walls and ceilings; an almost invisible support structure of numerous wine red sticks; two clear plastic bags held barely off from the ground with a fuchsia doubled string, two plastic rubber scraps of different colors (yellow and green) and sizes, connected to each other and hung a few centimeters from the floor by a thin yellow string stretched between two walls from a wall to a floor, an orange plastic rubber curtain that appears to be momentarily resting on a rod fixed diagonally to one of the room's wall, a yellow doubled string hanging from the ceiling with two small balls of the same color; hanging from the wall, almost blending with it, a piece of thin, crumpled paper cloth, with a slightly organic look, on which four several green elements can be discerned, reminiscent of a fingertip.

Despite Margret H. Blondal's precise intent to make the position of the objects within the environment appear incidental, there is obviously a careful compositional structure to their arrangement in the space.

Blondal's work features diverse elements; it is something midway between inside and outside, between the void and its negation, between life and its temporary absence. Space enclosed within a room is theoretically a space without life. Blondal uses few, extremely simple ingredients, and through the interaction of the individual object with the others and these objects with the essential elements of light and air from the windows and doors, life is returned to the entire space. I use the term "ingredient" purposefully, as Blondal herself draws on the image of leavening to explain her work. The artist says that once the final object has been placed in the installation, it has to be left to sit... long enough for the work to leaven unaffectedly. Blondal's work is always carefully hanging in the balance between two opposites, through a synesthetic process that, in theory, leaves out none of the five senses. As she said in an interview, it is in a state midway between control and coincidence. It is also midway between levity and gravity, play and drama, calm and tension, before and after.

In a closed physical space, objects are scattered about in a constant state of becoming. Their position is as temporary as their individual status is temporary. Though contained in a

closed space, the objects combine to give the impression of openness and fluidity. Blondal's art is about life lived from day to day, and her art seems to feed off of light and air.

Though sunlight looks white to us, it actually results from the overlapping of many different-colored rays. Light is a collection of electromagnetic waves with the right frequency to be perceived by the human eye. Each electromagnetic ray, with a wavelength between 0.8 and 0.4 microns, creates a specific color impression. White light is the collection of different rays that all have different wavelengths. When light comes into the project room through the five large glass entrances, it hits the objects where the artist placed them, the individual objects appear as a certain color to us because they absorb all the other colors except for the one of which they are made. So, we see, thanks to the sunlight, many little points of a bright, energizing color, from red to violet. And it is because of light that the bright colors take shape in the void of the room in the small objects that the artist placed with meticulous care. The installation's ultimate effect is a musical harmony that can be seen through color instead of sound, made of silent voids and colored notes of music, in a harmonious alternation that seems completely natural, though it is, in fact, carefully considered in every detail.

What we commonly call "air", or, to be precise, the atmosphere, is a thin gaseous layer that envelops the earth, and is fundamental for life. The oxygen in the atmosphere's composition, an abiotic element like light, is what makes life possible for all living things. Blondal's installations take on a physiological/biological nuance, first from light, and then from the air we breathe. When we come into the space, we have the strange feeling that we ought to hold our breath. First, it is out of fear of upsetting the delicate balance of objects that she placed seemingly randomly on all the surfaces, and then because of a sense of suspension that emanates from the objects and their interaction. Only after having visually taken them all in, do we feel that we can breathe again. This sensation is the objective of this installation, which only breathes once it has been taken in as a whole. We could say that Blondal's installations breathe through those who look at them with their senses alert. At that moment, we have the feeling that we can breathe with our minds.

It is fundamental for Blondal that she stay for a time in a place where she is invited to make a project. She has to come into contact with the local natural and human terrain. Margret H. Blondal needs to listen to the sensations that come from the surrounding context, not just the physical internal space, the external one, too. Blondal absorbs the life outside of the space where she will make the installation, and after a highly personal reworking of it, through intense inner concentration, she makes the project with an urgency bordering on physiological. We can say her works are made in true symbiosis with the place. Again, this

is not just the physical place, but more broadly, the geographic and socio-anthropological space. Blondal interacts with the social context even more than the architectural one, and takes both elements into consideration before making her installations. It was an invaluable experience to watch her walk around the streets, stopping to concentrate on seemingly insignificant details, analyzing food in all its aspects, breathing in tune with the sensations she experienced, collecting forgotten objects that would otherwise be unusable. This total immersion in the life of the place that hosts her lets Blondal achieve a knowledge of the place that, though short due to time limitations, gives her the input she needs to start her installation.

Physically going into the space as interpreted by the artist, we participate in the activation of the work as a whole. Blondal's installations have the power to activate a new way of perceiving things in those who experience them. Margret H. Blondal creates installations that, though within a closed physical space, can reawaken in observers vibrations that are usually only perceived in contact with the life that flows outside. The effect of her watercolors is similar. Blondal's watercolors are made on paper, starting with a pencil drawing and seem to come to the surface slowly, gradually as they are looked at. Not unlike when memories come rising slowly to the surface, and return to our minds seeming hazy at the edges, as if wrapped in fog. An oily ring surrounds the drawings like a cellular membrane and adds to the images' gauzy, faded effect. The artist's unique choice to spread the watercolors with olive oil, as an organic layer of protection for the image, creates unexpected effects. The artist explains: - *Olive oil is one of my favorite essence in the world, it is a beautiful material and nutritious both visually and physically. I think I am drawn to how the colours becomes sculptural when I dip the brush into the oil before it is put on the paper. I cannot control where the stain will spread out and that is something that always fascinates me in the working process, i.e. to allow the material to be alive.* -

In the installations, Margret H. Blondal uses twine, paper, foam, tubes, recycled strings, rags streaked with color, rubber or plastic objects borrowed from their previous use, stealing little pieces of everyday life. She has no desire to make something monumental, preferring to concentrate on images, objects and transient moments. She prefers to comment on what is alive. This is why she uses organic or perishable materials. Time passes over them and leaves its mark, a mark that is nothing more than the flow of life itself.