

Silvia Bächli

Introduction to the exhibition at the Swiss Pavilion at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, 2009

by Hans Rudolf Reust

Drawings on the walls or on tables – wherever we go in the Swiss Pavilion, our gaze begins to wander, taking our thoughts along. Silence hangs over the drawings and the spaces between them, as over a remote landscape where much seems familiar, but which retracts in profound muteness. What is different in this constellation of accustomed things, although they conceal no secret?

«That. That was it. Now it has begun. It is. It continues. It moves. Further. Evolves. Becomes this and this and this. Goes on as that. Metamorphoses. Expands. Combines other with more and persists as other and more.» Inger Christensen, *det/it*

Silvia Bächli (*1956) has continuously developed her drawing practice, with changing formats and techniques, across three decades. Drawing is a movement of sight, of slight deviations and shifts in the gravitational field of undirected attention to objects and dream elements that do not really come to rest, even in what is drawn. Some drawings are easily legible, nameable; with others, names and words hover on the tip of the tongue, only to be lost

irretrievably after a moment: «THAT.» «I know what I don't want: no journalistic works, no things that could be said better in a different language. Drawing is entering new territory and walking around in it, creating space and exploring, working with and against the edges of the paper» (Silvia Bächli, 2009). In this way, not only painterly moments occur; a filmic view is often also cast on bodies or things or their details, on landscapes, gestures, structures or sequences, which are caught as if in stills. Every sheet has its chosen position in the constellation of a space, so that seeing is always in motion between images, in search of multiple connections, consistency in the complex. All at once, a related motif returns like an echo from a far corner of the space. In the most recent drawings, colour tones appear, almost imperceptibly, as if previously unknown nuances were being revealed within the black and white. Drawing opens up interior spaces and expands inspace without conclusively taking it over. The weightless mobility of the smaller-format sheets implies that alternative arrangements would be possible. A pile of drawings contains suspension into different patterns of thought on a table or a wall. Ultimately, even the single sheet reveals itself

as a process, by preserving the traces of the brush or pencil with which lines and areas are drawn. In image theory, drawing claims a permanent preliminary status. Drawings lay traces to an idea, and thus remain in suspense; but they also preserve the traces of their coming into being: they are irrevocably set in place, yet vulnerable. What, in the end, differentiates the fleeting trace on the paper from the inscription into it of a moment of spatial staging?

Silvia Bächli takes on the current conception of drawing and thus the contradiction with which, at this time, no other artistic medium is so clearly faced: to expand upon a millennia-old tradition of immediacy. In a world of expended and necessary possibilities, every drawing remains a well founded question.