I Saw the Truth

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Where should start when writing a text about Andres Lutz and Anders Guggisberg? The profusion of associations that characterizes their work is as wide-ranging as the materials and the media in which they choose to express themselves. And since they work as a collective, that profusion is increased to the second power. Every one of their works implies a host of correlations. Given the generally unbridled exuberance of their ideas and projects, I Saw the Truth is decep-tively simple at first sight. What we see on a low polygonal table with a mirrored top has been reduced to a minimum: a small, fragile architectural model, tinkered out of bits of wood. It is illuminated from within, so that it casts its oversized shadow on the walls and ceiling of the exhibition space. In the works listed on their website www.lutz-guggisberg.com, Lutz & Guggisberg have placed the object in the category of "sculptures", subcategory "wooden sculptures". They list other classifications, such as sculptures made of metal or clay, and other groups of sculptures such as "Trophies", "Birds", "Vitrines" and "Museum Models". These might all be considered self-contained objects inasmuch as we can walk around them, in contrast to the duo's characteristic, sprawling installations. Wood is one of Lutz & Guggisberg's preferred materials. And it is readily available. Sticks of the kind used to make I Saw the Truth come from fields, woods and meadows. There is nothing spe-cific about them; they are associated with no particular cultural context and no particular group of people. Anybody and everybody can play and toy with them at will. Lutz & Guggisberg used the sticks they collected like a building kit, creating their labyrinthine structure apparently without a plan: stick by stick, element by element. The artists function as tinkerers; they fiddle around. Bricolage is second nature to them in their treatment of material and form; their insights are not drawn from analysis or the systematic development of mental images but rather from an associative meandering. A number of other works by Lutz & Guggisberg owe their existence to similar principles. They can be subsumed under a group of architectural creations and models made between 2003 and 2006. This species includes the Rocket City and the Nest as well as a comparatively weightier suite of sculptures made out of scrap wood, Six Institutes and the Complex. The explicitly open structure and the flow-ing spatial continuum of these works relate to the "Museum Models" and to some of the "Vitrines". There is always something provisional about them: they are complex architectural assemblages that elegantly disavow the building as a solid entity, for they are basically movable objects. The oeuvre of Lutz & Guggisberg has slowly been consolidating in both method and content. The playful handling of materials is linked to mental constructs that emerge in the process of creating the work and possibly even after it is finished, sometimes with additional reinforcement from the choice of title. Their source material is the entire formal canon and the entire inventory of images generated by the arts, the sciences and by popular culture as well. These they exploit with a thoroughly refreshing lack of inhibition. The maze of possible references in I Saw the Truth is as labyrinthine as its structure. The fantastic appearance of stairs, paths and rooms in this three-dimensional latticework has great narrative potential; its rudimentary craftsmanship recalls a tree house, the construction itself a space probe - the kinship between archaic artefact and state-of-the-art technology is revealing.

In addition, the work contains art historical references to the spatial compositions of, say, Antoine Pevsner and Naum Gabo, or to contemporary constructivist architec-ture as represented by Frank Gehry, Daniel Libeskind and Zaha Hadid. Finally, Constant's urbanist models come to mind, for in his vision of a New Babylon he created a habitable universe of the fut-ure that avoids anything fixed. All of the elements in his models are mobile structures; his nomadic cities are subject to ceaseless change and permanent reconfiguration through the intervention of a creative homo ludens. Echoes of kinetic art also reverberate in the oeuvre of Lutz & Guggisberg. I Saw the Truth is situated on the border between object and installation and occupies a space that is much bigger than the modest dimensions of the model would suggest. The latticework of the object itself invites extensive, detailed study, while the shadows cast on the walls and ceiling present inextricably tangled tracery. The work transcends the clear confines and dimensions of the gallery space and we willingly allow ourselves to become entangled in the delightfully fascinating play between the image and its copy. Seen in this light, I Saw the Truth clearly explodes the boundaries of being classified as a "wood sculpture", although this does not render that category obsolete. The devotion to order that charactrizes the list of works is, in fact, a deliberate artistic strategy and references the sense of order that determines our every action, even when dealing with art. A playful anarchism in-forms Lutz & Guggisberg's send-up of the entire canon of middle-class virtues - just think of the achievements and exemplary deeds which they have chosen to be commemorated with trophies. "Good taste" also figures prominently in many of their projects and they do not leave themselves unscathed in their ironic treatment of art and the art trade. With suitable pathos, they repeatedly stress the fact that questions of art are inextricably related to life and questions of life are inextricably related to art. What better way to explore such concerns than the quest for truth. Thanks to Plato's cave allegory, we all know that the truth lies behind the visible world. Everything that we see is only a shadow and a reproduction of truthful being. The cave stands for the sensually perceptible world, and ascending into light for the toilsome path to knowledge. Lutz & Guggisberg must have had this in mind as well upon giving their sculpture its artful and eloquent title, and thereby monumentalizing a decisive moment in the history of ideas.

Translation: Catherine Schelbert