

# SEANKELLY

Kumar, Natasha. "Rebecca Horn Show: Elicit feelings from things." *The Times Hub*, September 28, 2021.



Despite all the diversity of her work, Horn is known primarily for her installations. It doesn't matter whether you think of the ten-meter-high rusting "Tower of Remembrance" on Barcelona's beach or your installation "Concert for Buchenwald" in Weimar, in which mute musical instruments emphatically mark the absence of the victims of the Holocaust.

The show at the Kunstforum – Horn's first large personalities to be seen in Austria for over 30 years – offers a condensed overview of the work of the great artist, who was born in Michelstadt in the Odenwald in 1944, and focuses on the diversity of her means of expression.

## **Concert of moods**

The first room of the exhibition in the Kunstforum, which opened on Tuesday, is dominated by her gigantic work "Concerto dei Sospiri (German: "Concert of Sighs"): an accumulation of building pallets and black cloth, interspersed with remains of walls and copper funnels that look like to wind an enormous plant through the structure.

The installation only gradually unfolds its effect: voices murmur a text, while walking around the object radiates a diffuse melancholy – a feeling that is assigned a fixed place in Horn's work. In general, it is impressive how many emotions resonate in the work – Horn creates moods without having to specifically name their trigger.

## **Melancholy machines**

# SEANKELLY

Just around the corner is Horn's famous piano: "Concert for Anarchy" (1990), another version of which is in the London Tate collection, is one of Horn's automata that liven up the exhibition. One of the objects is constantly in motion.

The upside-down piano spews out its keys accompanied by dissonant tones, opposite the work's antique typewriters hanging on steel pipes with "Blue Monday Strip" (1993).

Leisure Communications Christian Jobst

The typewriters in "Blue Monday Strip" (1993) type for themselves, showing a world of things in which people are absent

They are melancholy machines that rattle to themselves and seem futile and puzzling from the outside. Ultimately, however, they are one thing above all: witnesses to the absence of people, such as a piano player or a writer, and that is what makes these objects so sad.

## **Reliable objects**

Between the piano and the typewriter, a device opens and closes three Franz Kafka volumes, which are enthroned on glass showcases with an iron frame. It contains individual objects, a pair of men's shoes, a briefcase, and an umbrella.

Even without knowing the title of this "Kafka cycle" (1994), one feels reminded of Kafka's literary cosmos. For example, the astonishment of the protagonist K., suddenly confronted with an opaque indictment, or the frustration of the land surveyor of the same name in "Das Schloß".

Bank Austria Kunstforum Wien / Gregor Titze

Steel bars that cut through doors – for Horn a metaphor for dealing with the past

This is exactly what defines Horn's work: if you consider possible references, you will receive a commentary on world literature, history and aesthetic programs from Surrealism to Arte Povera. The objects do not need these references to be effective. They convey their meaning through moods, are at the same time unpretentious and multi-layered.

## **Condensed overview**

Documentations of early performances and film works make the creative phase comprehensible in which Horn began to lengthen the body in various ways into the surrounding world. For example with her "Glove Fingers" (1970) and "Einhorn" (1972), an early Super 8 film in which a naked woman can be seen with a long white horn on her head.

## **Exhibition notice**

"Rebecca Horn" can be seen in the Kunstforum Wien daily from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. until January 23, 2022, and until 9 p.m. on Fridays.

# SEANKELLY

These works can be read as counterparts to the installations, in which there are no longer any bodies, but human feelings come to life in the objects. One of the most beautiful works in the show “Ostrich Egg Penetrated by Lightning” (1995) is a symbol of an attitude to life between comfort in an affluent society and threat at the same time: an ostrich egg – just like feathers and violins, a leitmotif by Horn that appears in many of his works – is almost lovingly cleaned and polished by brushes, while it threatens to be pierced by two pointed steel rods.

## **Insights into filmmaking**

Despite a strong focus on installations from the 1980s and 1990s, the Vienna exhibition offers more than just a fleeting impression of the work, which spans around six decades, using sketches, film clips of performances and isolated paintings.

If you have the time, you can immerse yourself in Horn’s filmmaking in the basement. For example, there is “Buster’s Bedroom” (1991), in which a young woman with an obsession for Buster Keaton visits a sanatorium where the actor was allegedly once treated and meets the strange chief doctor (Donald Sutherland). So much can be revealed: The piano from the installation “Song of Anarchy” plays a key role in it.