



Federico Tosi, *Ariel (Spirale)* (Ariel [Spiral]), 2018, concrete, glue, 39 × 35½ × 1¾".

sponges, shells, bones—installed as if waiting to be catalogued in a museum warehouse. (The titles of Tosi's works often stress a lighthearted attachment to the worlds of film and mass culture: While one of the marker-pen drawings was titled *L.A. Confidential*, toning down what might otherwise seem overly dramatic and grandiose, "Ariel" not only has many literary resonances, but is a familiar name in pop culture, from Disney to Marvel.)

Another concrete sculpture, *Untitled (Stargate)*, likewise evoked ancient things, bringing to mind the beginning of human culture in the form of a fragment of ancient architecture. In *Principe* (Prince), the perfect, sinuous, and fractal form of an enormous shell, executed in olive wood, revealed the mathematical language of natural phenomena. A group of small bronze sculptures, *Like Ophycordiceps Unilateralis*, showed a fungus attacking a finger, transforming it into a mass of unpredictable material. The consumption of the body to the point where it is reborn in another form embodies the alchemical principle of the metamorphosis of matter through the slow passage of time, while also alluding to the Baroque penchant for surprise and caprice.

The work that concluded the show had the look of a colorful little toy. This small resin sculpture, *Underwater*, depicts a boy who looks at a shell he is holding as he swims. Positioned in isolation in the space, the figurine transformed the white wall into the immensity of the ocean, connecting to the vastness of the universe at the beginning of the exhibition in another allusion to the long and inexorable temporality of evolution.

—Alessandra Pioselli

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

## VIENNA

### Knut Ivar Aaser

FELIX GAUDLITZ

The center of Knut Ivar Aaser's exhibition "*Bordskikk*" (Table Manners) was occupied by a miniature wooden table, about an inch and a quarter high, called *Untitled* (all works 2019). A bright surface of sanded maple set the table apart from the oily shine of the gallery's herringbone parquet floor, and the combination of richness of detail with diminutive

scale let it oscillate between the categories of furniture and toy. Three tiny clothespins were scattered over its surface, as if they had been dropped accidentally. These unobtrusive miniature objects appealed to the imagination, inviting viewers to speculate on the backstory of their inconspicuous presence.

Hung on the walls was a series of five printed works, *Untitled (Bordskikk #1–5)*. Each was a single sheet of paper bearing an assortment of palm-size rectangular drypoint and monotype prints, mostly in blue and turquoise tones. Some of the drypoints depicted cutlery—forks, knives, spoons—and table settings. Others introduced the tasty-looking items to which one might apply the aforementioned utensils. Among these dishes were several particularly familiar to customers of Viennese cafés: schnitzel, Sacher torte, and even palatschinken, a crepe-like Austrian pancake. Other items, such as pizza and steak, catered to more generic tastes. The monotype prints, on the other hand, had no properly representational subject matter. Unlike the soft, dulled lines of the drypoint, the painterly scrawliness of the monotypes introduced a more saturated visual element to this group of works.

In ever-changing combinations and arrangements of the two kinds of imagery—"subtly changing the character of conversations," as the poetic press release by the artist Tarald Wassvik stated—the prints were a means of exploring the larger visual field of the material support, the sheets of paper they were printed on. In *Untitled (Bordskikk #4)*, for instance, a broadly unitary and dense rectangular shape echoed the format of the paper. *Untitled (Bordskikk #3)*, on the other hand, followed a different logic of distribution that nonetheless acknowledged the format of the sheet in that solitary prints in irregular columns were pushed toward each side, while a central area was left open. In general, however, the individual prints on each sheet interleaved and overlapped, were oriented horizontally and vertically, right side up and upside down, not necessarily in accordance with the orientation of their subject matter. Drypoint over drypoint over monotype accumulated to sometimes barely decipherable layerings of marks and imagery.

One might have been reminded of the printing press that inspired Leo Steinberg to coin the term *flatbed picture plane* in 1968. Operative horizontal surfaces upon which things and information accumulated provided the critic with a new paradigm of pictorial art that went against previous models based on the verticality of the visual field. Yet if the horizontality indexed in Aaser's works speaks to us of the playfulness of contriving and of the pleasure of exploiting the flatness of the printing plane for visual effect, their palimpsestic character also adopts the heavier, more romantic manner of Baudelairean excess. The scattered images of dishes paired with the artist's scribbled lines induce a de-differentiation of singular impressions, as if they had been mixed up in a lapse of memory, or were overlapping in a drunken haze of thoughts brewing in the clouded mind of a late-night café guest. As Steinberg observed, horizontality is, after all, the state in which "we do our begetting, conceiving, and dreaming."

—David Misteli



Knut Ivar Aaser, *Untitled (Bordskikk #2)*, 2019, drypoint and monotype print on paper, 31¾ × 24¾".