

Živa Božičnik Rebec

Topical Applications 2

19 December 2019 – 16 February 2020

The exhibition addresses the topic of the disappearance of the body in the substances, protocols and products of the contemporary beauty industry that treat the body as a surface that can be designed and augmented. In the process, the properties of the body (of the skin) become not so much an attribute of the physical human body as a “special effect” of cosmetic products, where skincare is marked by notions of a pristine hyper-designed surface detached from the body.

Živa Božičnik Rebec is also showing her work in the Museum of Modern Art at the 9th Triennial of Contemporary Art U3 this year, specifically, the objects *Tan Wall* and *Chromeprint* from her previous *Topical Applications* (2017) series. This solo exhibition in the *Draught* series expands on the presentation at the U3 Triennial with the remaining objects from the series (*Towel 1*, *Gloves T25*, *Wall (PVC)*), and takes the already addressed issues further with three new works (*Highlighters*, *Brush* and *Smudge*, all 2019).

The common ground of the works exhibited here consists in the problem of the contact between two surfaces – the surface of the cosmetic product and the surface of the body (the skin) – which, however, is here defined as the contact between exclusively artificial substances. The organic body, otherwise the target surface of cosmetic applications, has been here excluded and actually made redundant. *Gloves T25* demonstrates logic similar to that behind *Chromeprint* (at the Museum of Modern Art), where the perfectly reflective chromed surface is marred with a smudge that could be mistaken for a partial impression of a body, although it is in actuality the application of a body cream. White memory-foam gloves with pink fingertips seem to be documents of past use; however, they bear no traces of the body. They have never touched either hand or face. The gloves are not an aid for powdering, but a powdered interface, and insofar as they bear witness to any contact it is the contact between the surface of the glove and the surface of the make-up powder. Similarly, *Towel 1* and *Highlighters* (2019) could be said to be the already realized results that these products are expected to produce on the surface of the body, since they assume the characteristics of the surfaces that can purportedly be achieved with the application of these products. The body disappears in the procedures of cosmetic treatments and (re)appears as the property of the surface of the products themselves. Or rather, it does not actually disappear, since it has never been present in the first place. The works in the exhibition do not presuppose a previous existence of a body now absent or replaced with substitutes in some way. Rather than dealing with the body, the works broach questions concerning the cosmetic products themselves and their “topical applications” (the application of substances to specific parts of the body), which by definition treat the body as a series of distinct, separate surfaces with properties (flexibility, smoothness, reflectiveness, tone, etc.) that can be designed and altered. The works in the exhibition thus operate with ideas of the body that the cosmetic industry is expected to produce with its products and the prescribed protocols of application. The item being sold here is a specific expected or desired “bodily effect” or the surface the cosmetic products aim to achieve.

The materials used in the exhibited works consist in mineral powders and liquid foundations as well as latex, silicone toned with pigments, and other materials associated with the design of cosmetic products and the places of their presentation (varnish, PVC foil/sheets, chrome surfaces, glass). Equally important in Živa Božičnik Rebec’s practice as the materials themselves and their original contexts are the procedures of their application, aiming to achieve a perfect surface, reducing as much as possible the “touch”: casting and pouring, airbrushing techniques, cutting with a CNC router, digital modeling, industrial painting, etc.

In *Brush*, the wall of the white cube, this purportedly “neutral” framework for or even packaging of art (the white cube of an art fair stand, perhaps?), is treated as a test surface on which to try out and present a sample of a material (powder) as well as the tools and protocols of its application. Unlike *Tan Wall* (on view as part of the U3 Triennial), where the powder has been systematically applied in even strokes with a powder brush, *Brush* is a case of a machine-worked surface, of application from a distance, without actually touching, without traces of the hand – with an airbrush. The associations with digital tools used to retouch images (e.g. the Photoshop Brush Tool) are hardly accidental. *Wall (PVC)*, too, deals with a gallery wall, covering it entirely in shiny adhesive foil normally used to protect delicate surfaces from damage or to prolong their life. The shiny packaged wall also produces a wet-look effect.

Smudge is an object adopting the typical form of a smudge of cream in stock images, but is the materialization of a digital model. Thus, Živa Božičnik Rebec gradually turns the focus of the exhibition as well as of her artistic practice toward issues related to designing cosmetic substances themselves and the ways in which they are offered (or promoted) as products/items.

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Živa Božičnik Rebec graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana in 2014 with a degree in glass and ceramics design, and followed up with her MFA studies in sculpture there. She has exhibited her work at home and abroad, among others at the Simulaker Gallery, Novo mesto (2017), the Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana (2018), the Cmurek Castle (2015), and the international Fashion/Art Toronto show, Toronto, Canada (2014). In 2019, she took part in a residence program at the Karlin Studios center (FUTURA Center of Contemporary Art, Prague).

Public program:

Thursday, 28 January 2020 at 6 p.m.: a short lecture by Domen Ograjenšek

Sunday, 16 February 2020 at 5 p.m.: a guided tour with the artist Živa Božičnik Rebec and the curator Tjaša Pogačar

Draught is a series of solo exhibitions on the ground floor of the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova presenting fresh new ideas in the field of contemporary art; this exhibition is curated by Tjaša Pogačar.