

Lorenza Longhi  
*Treat Yourself to a Break*  
08.04.-08.05.2021

Oskar Weiss and Oliver Falk are pleased to present Lorenza Longhi's solo show *Treat Yourself to a Break*.

Waiting can be a state of heightened awareness – an awareness of time and form. It's usually an annoying prelude to an upcoming appointment or event, or a stop on the way from one place and another. But when we become conscious of it, waiting often reveals to us the relativity of time (15 minutes can be an eternity) and social constructs (politeness, physical proximity), as well as the bureaucratic mechanisms used to regulate time and people (tickets, timetables, calendars, information signs). Not for nothing are stores and advertisements often placed in these transit zones: after all, we try to kill time there by engaging in other activities or persuade ourselves to compensate for the boring wait by treating ourselves to something good during this downtime.

Artists in particular, who are used to connecting contemplation (which is similar to waiting) with the visual, are likely to analyze the design and display of these ads and signs. Lorenza Longhi is fascinated by the look and framing of advertising and product presentation. Apple, for example, succeeded early on in turning the very act of unpacking a newly purchased item into a sensuously gratifying event. Similarly, high-end fashion wraps new articles of clothing in packaging that looks and feels good, while Ikea makes use of 3D renderings to give a hyperrealistic, complaisant look to the room sets featured in their catalogs. Needless to say, the object is to kindle desire and beguile consumers into spending their money. This constructed desire is as goal-oriented as waiting for an event that we want to occur. In a very classical sense, we might use the word "decorum" to refer to the supposedly superficial "incidentals" employed to sell the actual products (advertising, packaging, display) or to waiting areas as transit spaces that are no less "incidental" to the actual appointment: these are ornamental additions designed to take matching or appropriate form. They don't always succeed in taking such appropriate form, but the highest standard often seems to provide a benchmark for ads and information boards alike. Presentations of food, for instance, whether an outspread dish or just a leaf of parsley, seek to evoke opulence; jewelry and perfume are displayed in duty-free shops on shiny plastic surfaces designed to imitate solid high-end furniture; restrooms on trains aim to give the impression of a larger, luxurious space with photographic wallpaper of blossoming cherry trees; and notices in offices and department stores are hung up on the wall in chrome-plated fold-out plastic frames.

Lorenza Longhi's exhibition is divided up into several rooms, each fitted out with benches put together by the artist herself. They fit in with the gallery's window boards and become furniture for waiting that tries to suit the conditions of the place in an appropriate form and makes due allowance for the structure of the existing space. The small spherical work hanging from the ceiling right at the entrance takes up the sculptural nature and prefabricated forms of certain window decorations and of the kind of receptacles for donations to be found at Zurich airport, for example, and other "non-places" (Marc Augé). A larger work in the rearmost room of the gallery, also held by a hand-woven net, forms a counterpart to it. The two-part work in the first room is a take-off on the signage for duty-free areas at airports. As in all her tableaux, Longhi references not only the visual forms of advertising and signs, but also the idiosyncrasies of certain art forms, such as the problematics of minimalism, that end up serving as décor in the realm of commercial design (Tim Griffin). Here, too, she turns found items of graphic design into silkscreen prints, which she then transfers to panels, often lined with soft paper from the packaging of high-end fashion labels or sheets of paper from discarded office supplies, reworking leftover odds and ends in detail to serve as image carriers. She takes up slogans from punchy promotional cam-



paigns replete with their original layout and reproduces them as commercial dialectics (“Oh, I want it”) or simply cuts them out and turns them into objects without any further transformative processing: *August Aktion* and *October Aktion* show pages from an Italian DIY store catalog displaying products in an interior space, though without achieving the hyperrealism of an Ikea catalog or rendering them any more appealing. Failure thus comes to indicate an effort at appropriate presentation. So all the panels are set in plain aluminum-strip frames or under Plexiglas panes, quoting the neoliberal conventions of framing that strives to look presentable or even artistic.

On your way out of the exhibition, you'll pass by some small silvery works on canvas on found metal mounts. Like a demure „Thank you for your visit“, this series adheres to a repetitive form and yet stresses a love for style – not least through the titles of these works: they're all palindromes, a kind of wordplay in which adherence to form, albeit respecting syntactical and grammatical structures, comes before content.

Otto Bonnen