

Christian Greutmann:

Text on the Exhibition in the Galerie im Gluri Suter Huus, in Wettingen

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Anita Pfau works with an old photographic technique called the photogram. In camera-less photography, objects are placed directly on the photographic paper in the darkroom. The paper is exposed to light from above, resulting primarily in a light imprint or "light shadow" of the object. The technique fascinated various artists before Anita Pfau, among them painters such as Picasso, Max Ernst and László Moholy-Nagy. The photogram's painterly result also fascinates Anita Pfau.

Anita Pfau's photograms come about very slowly and require precise preparation. First plant parts are examined for their suitability as subjects for a photogram. Selected plants are carefully arranged and exposed on the photographic paper (baryta paper for black and white photographs). Multiple exposures of the image create layers and shadings.

Anita Pfau experiments with different photographic development techniques, for example pseudo solarisation. Here a chemical development process is interrupted and the photographic paper is exposed a second time to create shiny contours of the object. Anita Pfau has a clear course of action here as well: She does not always solarise the entire image, but rather certain areas. For example, a square area in the centre or the outer edges is covered. This creates image segments with very different effects, sometimes even 3-dimensional.

A further intervention in the development process is brown tinting. This is a sign that lets any photographer know his developer has to be replaced. Anita Pfau is interested in this „unaesthetic“ phenomenon and uses it to tint her photograms. With the help of a diluted selenium bath, she can achieve a stronger brown tinting of the solarised areas of the image.

Additional colouring is achieved through light tinting: The development process is concluded in the fixer solution in the darkroom. Exposing developed, but not yet fixed black and white photographic paper to light again creates unusual tinting. Various colourations result depending on the light source and the intensity of post-exposure. The colour palette goes from dark yellow to salmon, to orange, beige and brown. The mistletoe series shows the same motive in various colours and tinting.

In her artistic work, Anita Pfau moves between alchemistic experimentation and botanical collection. She shows us familiar plants in a new, non-familiar way. She arranges balanced, quiet compositions, and, for example, shows us the beauty of agave leaves in her own unique way. The restrained colouring suggests a chemical process, but as beholders we can immerse ourselves in the copper tones or simply enjoy them as aesthetic phenomena.