

*Always Somebody Moving* by Meghan Dailey

There is no question that Sol Kjøk is a superb draftswoman who excels at rendering the human figure in astonishing detail on paper, canvas and directly on the surfaces of gallery walls. But conquering the two-dimensional realm is just one act of many that comprise her intricately choreographed, highly physical process.

Kjøk's art implies constant motion, both in its making and in its subject. The bodies she depicts—male and female (usually herself), naked and often bald though some have vivid red hair—are forcefully active. They stretch and swing, link up into human chains, hang from one another's limbs and lengths of hair. They lock limbs and converge into spheres of flesh, huddle and then unfurl, releasing their collective, coiled energy. This reflects Kjøk's own state of constant motion, both through the action of the hand, in making lines and contours, and through her own poses as a model and subject. In the studio she and her co-performers engage in athletic moves: swinging from ropes, balancing on balls, and extending their bodies like acrobats. She photographs the actions, and those source images are then arranged collage-like, into compositions, which she gradually transforms into drawings.

The relationship between concept, execution and object is particularly explicit in Kjøk's site-specific piece for her Kunsthau Tacheles exhibition. Prior to the show's opening, she will live in the gallery for nine straight days, drawing the large-scale piece directly onto a freestanding wall, racing to complete the work in time. For much of that period, she is alone (solitude being the optimal condition for maximum concentration), eating and sleeping very little. All the while, a camera records her every move; that video documentation, playing on high-speed, will be shown alongside the completed drawing, allowing both elements to exist in an expanded field and the viewer to experience the work in both the present and past.

In the course of working so intensely, notions of the self and of time collapse, until, mentally and physically, Kjøk reaches a heightened state in which she feels a part of the piece (various performance artists have spoken of achieving a trancelike state during such extended acts of endurance).

A formidable amount of stamina and commitment are required to carry out such an epic project. Kjøk is well-prepared for this degree of athleticism; an avid runner, she has completed the New York City Marathon several times.

Her core themes—the body, its limits and the tension between its strength and its vulnerability—mutate into a variety of mediums. Recent sculptural pieces in which color-pencil drawings on Mylar are mounted on hand-fired glass represent a recent extension of her project into three dimensions. These works were first executed in cast resin, but lately Kjøk has begun collaborating with a glassmaker. The glass, which she likes for its resemblance to ice, transmits perfectly the notion of fragility and of accident, since the casting process introduces unexpected results, slight imperfections. The sculptures are also hung from braided human hair, which is both strong enough to hold a certain amount of weight yet also fragile, even unpredictable. There is a risk that the pieces, like the bodies rising and converging in her drawings, could fall—a maddening but tantalizing possibility of self-destruction colliding with a willful determination to be present.

