



ERIKA HOCK / ELBOWS & KNEES

Like a walk-through drawing, linear structures traverse the space. At a closer approach you recognize them to be a group of furniture that, in its muted coloring, seems a little nostalgic. A lamp, a towel rack, a chair or stool and a kind of ladder, all without pedestals, stand directly on the floor, as though ready for use. In their materiality, the sculptures by Erika Hock recall the icon from the history of design: the cantilever chair, which was developed in the 1920s. The idea of a flexible chair, whose new form also was meant to convey a new, seated comfort, seemed then to be generally in the air. At the time several architects—among whom were major representatives of Neues Bauen, like Mart Stam, Marcel Breuer or Mies van der Rohe—were at work at more or less the same time on a constructive solution for a chair without back legs, the seat of which would sway in a forceful or muted way, depending on the materials. Modern man was thus meant to be mobile also when at work in a chair, as if seated on an invisible column of air. The chair was to follow the human body, tracing an elegant line in space—similar to Erika Hock’s sculptures—whereby the use of steel tubing immediately lent it an industrial character. It was then hardly foreseeable that steel tubing would be used in the public realm, as has been the case since the 1950s. Thus renowned artists like Isamu Noguchi developed equipment for his so-called Playscapes, i.e., sculptural playgrounds for children. Today almost entirely replaced by wooden jungle gyms, these colorful metal structures, between autonomous sculpture and useful object, invite children to occupy them in play. The sculptures by Erika Hock are likewise a kind of “mixed creature”. Though they renounce any kind of functionality—as somewhere between sculpture, furniture and toy—they open up a domain that sets visitors in motion and prompts their involvement. So it is that in *Elbows and Knees*, the sculptures themselves are suddenly transformed into a body and take on life-like features: an elbow self-confidently juts out or an outstretched leg presumptuously gets in the way. They lean against the wall, lie on their back or cower in a corner and form a scurrilous ensemble that quite unexpectedly falters, physically and mentally.

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(Translation: Jeanne Haunschild)