

Looking back to the future

Civilization Tree is a huge sculpture built of the civilization scrap that formed society and life during the last century.

You wonder what is going on over there when travelling by train, you can not oversee it driving in your car. People stop fascinated and have a glance at the project and the artist working there. Silvan Köppel is working in a kind of «open air studio» in the middle of the (shopping-) centre of Heerbrugg. While the project is growing, there are several events taking place, such as vernissages, concerts and more.

Civilization Tree – the idea

Take used material from the last 100 years and build something new – and still transitory.

The idea emerged about a year ago. In front of and all around the artists house – which is located in a very idyllic place – there is the stock of scrap the artist needs for his work.

And there was the rusty car body of an Opel Olympia 1940 standing on a mound near an apple tree.

The idea, to let the car grow upwards with the tree, was absolutely fascinating, but not realizable due to the instability of the tree.

So the idea was born to build a tree out of scrap after nature's shining example.

A tree, as we know it, is growing, carrying fruits, nurturing us, the wood is used to make fire and build houses or furniture. Silvan Köppel's Civilization Tree does not live. One day it will fall to pieces.

Silvan Köppel's Civilization Tree is 15 m high. It is beyond the scope of all other objects the artist built before. And as Silvan is working in an open space, everyone can come around and have a look at it, could even be part of the project, if he or she wanted to. And only the confrontation with the subject of civilization scrap makes the whole thing interesting.

Understanding steel

from the point of view and with the words of Mimi Trüssel:

Silvan Köppel's roots are in the valley of the Rhine. He is a locksmith and a self-educated artist working with steel and scrap. And above all he knows how to live. His way of living, his family, his son, his friends, his way of «dealing» with all kinds of rules is part of his work and art and becomes visible in his sculptures.

When Silvan talks about his sculptures, he always talks in the diminutive, although many of them weigh tons.

His way of talking is an expression of modesty and really friendly bonds between himself and his objects. The sculptures are full of cheerfulness, wit and originality. But some of them are threatening in a certain way. All of them are touching and most of them provoke an inner smile and in the same time the observer might slip into another reality.

The funny becomes serious, the witty becomes sarcastic, the great becomes ironic.
But the objects never are aggressive or moralizing.
Above all they are authentic and the reason for that is the way they are made.

Silvan Köppel knows his business. He has a flair for forms and organic connections.
He combines the most unbelievable things and – what a surprise – it fits. We still
recognize the original form, but in the new surrounding and in combination with all
the other pieces something completely new has been created.

Silvan Köppel is playing with our habits of looking at things. The «natural» selection
of perceiving things does not work anymore and we are forced to think it over.