

Eberhard Bosslet

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EBERHARD BOSSLET

JOHN GIBSON GALLERY

Eberhard Bosslet brings a consistency of vision to a wide variety of formats. Besides his site-specific installations in exhibition spaces (such as his floor-to-ceiling steel-pipe construction in a stairwell at Documenta 8) and his outdoor projects in the Canary Islands (in which he defined the jagged contours of ruins with paint), Bosslet also creates architectonic paintings and sculptures that share many of the same concerns as his sitespecific projects. Bosslet's recent sculptures on display here are made from old file cabinets, which the artist transforms with an almost sadistic mastery (not unlike Gordon Matta-Clark's use of destruction as a means of transformation). The file cabinet, a visual analogue for any form of compartmentalized shelter, acts as a surrogate site on which to inflict change.

To transform the cabinet into sculpture. Bosslet has pulled the drawers out and bound them with crisscrossing loops of steel into square and rectangular formations. Roughly cut pieces of wood are sometimes wedged between the drawers (as in *Unicon*, 1988), or form a crossbrace in the empty square defined by the drawers (as in *Sachzwang II [Compulsory matter II]*, 1988). The empty, overturned cabinet is then attached to the wall or placed on the floor to serve as a pedestal for its drawers. Bosslet wastes nothing, and adds no more to each piece than what is needed to hold it together.

The manufactured object is now being incorporated into the work of several sculptors. While Haim Steinbach and Jeff Koons employ the art of merchandising to intensify the object's self-evidency Bosslet, like Jennifer Bolande and Martin Kippenberger, alters the object and thus refers to its physical and metaphoric mutability. Bosslet, more than any of the aforementioned artists, uses the manufactured object as a thing to be acted upon. The course of Bosslet's actions (the dismantling, the fitting together, the insertion of the wood, the strapping it down) is indelibly imprinted on the object.

The presence of destructive action and the semblance of coherent form appear in Bosslet's paintings as well. They are made of industrial materials (zinc premium, plastic plaster compound, zinc sulfide, and varnish) layered onto galvanized metal sheets. The outer layer of the surface is a coat of red, silver, or black paint. Bosslet scrapes into the dense surface, exposing shapes that look like architectural floor plans and, at times, the scratched and paint-smearred metal itself. He gouges into the work to extract his imagery, exerting the same level of aggression toward the surface that he does toward the file cabinet. Yet there is a contrived quality to these paintings that the sculptures happily lack. Damage has been inflicted on the file cabinets in the course of conventional use, and then by Bosslet's whirlwind bondage ceremony. In these sculptures, Bosslet does not completely „create“ the object's decay; rather, he transforms the life cycle of the object.

Matthew A. Weinstein