

Eberhard Bosslet

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Bosslet on the Canary Islands

in 1981, I booked a flight without accommodation to reach Tenerife in October. At this time I had the main course in the Department of painting at the Hochschule der Künste Berlin (now Universität of der Künste Berlin UdK) already completed and found myself in the post graduate master studies.

Motivated by reports from fellow students, who a year earlier, stayed as guests of their Berlin Professor, on Gran Canaria, I intend to spend several months on the to me completely unknown Canary Islands.

I wanted to escape the cold German winter and take a break from art by gaining distance from Berlin and I was going to check my relationship to art and in particular to the discipline "colorfield painting".

In the same year I was initiative founding member of "Material and effect e.V." an artist group that was beeing formed in Berlin. The founding act was written by me. Formulating a fundamental doubt on traditional art motifs and procedures the substantive or methodological orientation, was already established:

"Materials and their effects are investigated according to emotional, functional, intuitive, discursive, random and cultural aspects and modes of action.

Results, investigations and State forms, processes, products and situations appear and these facts are documented. Materials are all things, substances, organisms, relationships, systems and structures in natural, artificial, economic, scientific, social, and cultural space.

As effect will be considered: all mind-, perception and experience qualities that radiate from the materials or leading to this."

This parameters in mind, I went to Tenerife with the intention not to make any art on the Canary Islands. Without Spanish language skills, I set out to explore. I had brought the determination and the necessary money from Berlin, to buy me a motorcycle locally. I wanted a motocross bike. Ro rent such was not posible in 1981. To buy a second hand one failed due to the too high price expectations of the local dealers.

But then, in a decentral district of the island's capital Santa Cruz, I could acquire a motor scooter Vespa Sprint, pretty battered, inexpensive but roadworthy. I´v got a front and rear luggage carrier. So I was well equipped for the transport of my luggage. I had no fixed abode. The starting point of my daily tours was Los Cristianos in the South of the island. Though just in the South of the island, the ever-growing tourism led to constructions of new hotels and apartment complexes, there were surprisingly only a very few pensions. Those were mostly cheap and affordable for me.

The one to three week tourism and the demand for furnished apartments for seniors wintering, unfortunately did not lesd to additional offers on cheaper, briefly available rooms. My thirst to know more and more from the island, inevitably resulted in an every day worry where I could spend the next night.

Stimulated by the ubiquitous construction activities, which ranged from private attachment to the old houses in the rural environment, total demolition of old one-story houses made of stone or more modern cement blocks, up to apartment buildings in small and large format, the subject of building construction and housing is very much present everywhere.

More present than I it ever had experienced before and this even though I come from a family of architects and Berlin in the 70th until to day, could have brought the "theme" close to me because of the presents of refurbishment and new house construction. Gradually but piece by piece I became aware during my trips and activities, that home and living, travelling and arriving at home, are fundamental issues. Fundamental in the

truest sense of the word are the form-giving considerations to the room and space of a house.

The commercial expansion of the construction industry was followed by the growing demand in the domestic environment of the locals. Residential floor flat construction, road and port construction influenced in many places in the previously utilised agricultural areas and regions. Cultivated terrace fields lie fallow and new road construction cross them without regard to the conditions, to access newly planned residential areas. Vacant old agricultural buildings, but also new building ruins of investment failures; started, ground occupying pillar-ceiling-concrete skeletons could be seen over decades.

With a pronounced interest, of affections to dislike, I encountered all these developments who gave me from a few months after my first arrival in Tenerife for many years, strong artistic impulses in questioning and interventionistic researches.

Vespacolor (1982)

For my first trip with this scooter, from Santa Cruz in the North to Los Cristianos in the South, on the TF 28 the twisty road, I needed around four and a half hours. Along this road are many of the old villages, which were hardly changed by the new buildings. The villages and their homes had a remarkable dimension and color, that later motivated me to my first artistic action. The facades of the single-storey houses were strongly colored and individually designed. It was to assume that the residents or owners due the small size of the houses, were easily able to carry the coloring of the facades by themselves. So, every home had its individual "face". The single facade elements, such as the base, window and door soffits, eaves and window frames, and the always closed shutters and last but not least the actual wall of the house were usually painted in 3-4 colors.

Because the Vespa Scooter, like a car body consists of different body components an analogy to the facade elements was possible to see. I decided to paint the fenders, the seat, the wind shield and the main body of the Vespa in different colors. I used white wall paint (pintura plastica blanca) and tinting paints (colorantes) and started to mix the paints in front of a beautiful house identical to the facade. With these colors, I reset colors of the Vespa body elements. Then I always positioned the scooter alongside, parallel to the wall and made enough photos of this staged situation, to have a suitable photo to choose later.

With this version of the multi-colored scooter I continued my trip, until a different house particularly attractive motivated me to turn off the Vespa scooter alongside to the facade to take photos of this dialogical situation of unevenly colored and unequal objects before I started to mix the colors of this house and to transfer them to the scooter. Afterwards I photographed the now color identical objects together. After I proceeded so several times, another consideration with corresponding consequences came to me. Because I was not only in the village and urban areas, but also very often set in the countryside, the idea pushed on me, to make the mobile made colour scheme, which I drove around with me on the Vespa, again stationary.

I transferred not, what would be close, the colors on a house, but I transferred the colors to "cut out" and elements of the landscape: small and large boulders, a natural stone wall and cacti, to photograph them together with my scooter for more pictures. The photo series "Movable property and real estate" (Mobilien & Immobilien) was launched, which then resulted in another, modified versions. I realized 4 photo series of this kind. (Page 22-29)

From the colorful house facade to colored debris (1982-1986)

The beginning of making art was made and was no longer to stop. After the first three months in which I deliberately let me impress by the touristic, beautiful, folkloric aspects of the island, I registered subliminally the unsightly effects of the construction boom, the consequences and side effects. When commercial construction activities, both the demolition and construction debris were usually professionally disposed, so the accumulating rubble of "small building measures" of the ordinary people was "disposed" in the dry and rocky landscape.

I discovered the renowned colored facades as rubble in unfamiliar places. In a mixture of ecological moral outrage and fascination. To find myself in the situation, to intervene in this unexpected change of location of the well-known things and comment on this state of affairs, I started on the spot to turn the "beautiful" colored fragments with the color side up. The generated, mosaic-like formations that should arise from the sorting process, without being creatively designed. I realized 15 interventions of this type of "Clearing". (Page 76-107)

From the intention, to the plan, to the foundation (1983-2011)

Long ago I was captured by the Canary virus, which can equally affect locals as foreigners making holiday: I was thinking, how I could get a private house on this sun-drenched archipelago.

Every intension of this kind leads from the plan, to the foundation and then to the finished building.

Ore one embarks on the search for a suitable old building. Constandly with my Vespa scooter on the road, I penetrated even in remote areas and regions. Abandoned farms and abandoned construction sites tiggered in me spacial fascination. In particular, buildings, their original functioning appeared once inexplicable, interested me. There were mostly concrete buildings, which had no interior, seemed spontaneous built, with unprofessional equipment and were made for commercial/industriell purposes. There were ruins, which were integrated in the stony, rocky, vegetation-poor environment, by their shape, color and materiality. Because this ruins actually constituted a burden (legazy) they tended to hide due the general feelings of guilt, from the perception. This circumstances and state attracted my attention. I intended to give this disregarded entity a positive potential of attention by intervening to it with very simple technical and formal means. This was possible with a 12-15 cm wide brush, using white emulsion paint or lime and the self-imposed handicap, without design intention (sake), to draw a white line along the building and material edges on all sides. By this measure the bulinding peeled himself out from its surrounding and was striking.

The specific shape of the building was clarified and perceptible at simultaneous transfiguration of the overall appearance. I photographed the result always strive to get a maximum representative photography. Initley I entitled this series of interventions with "Construction drawings" later with "Reformations". I realized until today 25 interventions of this type. (Page 110-217)

The other typ of interventions, the so-called "concomitant" based on the phenomenon, that the open or destroyed windows of abandoned buildings look like black holes. The static cohesion of such buildings is despite, dilapidated condition undisputed. I began with the consideration, to enlarge the holes until the statics of the building apparently could not keep. I did not achieve this thtough demolition, but by paintig larg black geometric areas on the facade. I referred this painted-on black surfaces to the existing black-looking windows and doorways. The desired effect is accompanied by posible association to works by Kasimir Malewitsch or censoring bars. I realized until today about 12 interventions of this type. (Page 110-217)

Scrap metal & Sun (since1982)

About the same time in 1982, I started a photo series that includes today more than 100 photographs. I took as a motif left, burned, disassembled cars in some bizarre landscapes under the common title of "Schrott & Sonne". The imagined pace of former high-performance vehicles, transport and status symbols, are brought to standstil and slowed down in a tempo in this photographys. The wrecks become similar to the environment. As in the other photo series and work documentation, I put a balance between the main object and the "background", an equivalence of the visible existing things and the medium used ore the image components. In a few few works I applied the method o a painted- on, linear structure. For the benefit of a clear differentiation between the artwork with ruins and car wrecks, I decided to continue this series of works as pure photographic photo series. (Page 40-41)

City comfort und vacation comfort (1983-1984)

Parallel to the photographic series "Scrap metal & Sun" with car wrecks in the landscape and the staged photographs 'mobilien & immobilien"with painted Vespa scooter and facades, emerged the two BW photo series „city comfort and „vacation comfort“. The motifs of „city comfort“ I found in the hectic bustling streets of Barcelona. With a Data backside of my analogic camera I exposed on the BW negativ the words: „TRANQUILIDAD y SATISFACCION“ (pease and satisfaction), respectively the words I found in buses: "36 ASIENTOS - 98 VIAJEROS DE PIE" (36 seats - 98 standing passengers). The motives of the second BW photo series "Vacation comfort" I found in the tourist centre of Tenerife, at Playas las Americas. There I exposed in the negative of crowded or deserted beaches, buisness and construction scenes the words „BLEIBEN SIE KALKULIERBAR“ (remain predictable). This two photographic series include 48 shots. (Page 32-37)

From the intervention to the installation (since 1985)

In 1985 I developed from the experience and background of the interventions I made before, the installation series „Supporting Measures“. On the occasion of an exhibition in the „Espacio P“ in Madrid, (page 17) I added a space-filling construction made by normely temporarily used tubular steel props from the building trade (used at construction sites together with modular formworks) in the undoubtedly statically unchallenged inside of the

exhibition space. From this, I developed the work series of the „Supporting Measures“ continuing until today. I do that until today.

These constructions cannot hold without the counterpart of ceiling, walls and floor. There is always a need of one less than surplus and a more than to little to hold together all loose parts by means of the support, the pressure and the resulting friction. These installations are necessarily location-specific by their dimension. Structural they are again performable in different spaces. The necessary equipment on modular formwork panels and ceiling steel props are borrowed or rented for both the „Supporting Measures“ as well as for the „Modular Structures“ for every occasion of the exhibition. The works are virtually „performed“ and differ from case to case by an interpretation variability.

Floor plan, foundation and pipe systems (1985-1988)

A further line of development based on my interest in construction, building and houses takes its starting point in planing any building structure: the floor plan. Initially I made small sketches on graph paper A5-size and sheet of paper filling. I developed seemingly countless variants of a floor plan with one or two rooms. Thereafter I made as well as countless sketches variants of a structure that could bring associative piping systems and cooling fins in conjunction.

On my tours through the offshores of the island of Tenerife, I discovered pieces of ripped carpet floor. 1985, after several years of abstinence from flat painting surfaces, I discovered that these non-rectangular surfaces could be a good suitable painting surface for my previously developed floor plans and line circulations on paper. This discovery brought me back to painting on transportable painting surface. From then on, the painting surface was always significant and visible part of the “image event”. Each form complex got its own color in conjunction with this color specific materiality. Most particularly I used impasto, thick bulky commercial and industrial paints (dyes?).

About 60, mostly large-scale paintings I created until 1988 belonging to the series of “Floor plan & supply grid paintings”. The beginnings of this series happened on Tenerife in 1989.

Inspired by the ever-present surf athletes, I began using surf sail material for very large-scale, plan-like tapestries.

At no time I had a studio in Tenerife. But that did not stop me from getting started new developments such as the series of “Tapestries and Aprons” (1989-2008). It seems to me rather that particular circumstances motivated me to pursue new approaches. In case of the tapestries I referred further to the sketches from 1985/86, but detached from the origin to read as floor plan or piping systems. All determining components should be equally important and visible. A support or painting surface does not exist, or is the wall. Each color-form-complex of the plasticized surf-sail cloth was sewn together at the edges of the material. Integrated crystal clear film material leads the view onto the “image-bearing” wall. The sewing was made by a local surf sail specialist. With screws or nails and eyes the tapestries are hanging from the wall. They are usually larger than 3 x 4,50m

Basements and barriers (since 1986)

From the observation of the construction activities and my studies of the fundamental, structural elements of earthquake-resistant construction in the Canaries, I derived the series of sculptures “Basement and Barriers”. As “Basements” I have created in 1986, the strip foundation-like floor plan sculpture, using bricks and concrete blocks as modular elements, plus pipe systems.

The “Barriers” are based on sketches and reflections from 1984 to concrete-steel bodies and concrete-steel areas, which were first created on site in the exhibition space since 1985. They are mostly knee-high and installed to block the exhibition space. They are foundation-like structures made of concrete and steel reinforcement. They can be removed only by demolition after the exhibition.

Bilateral relations (1993-1998)

The realized “Bilateral Relations” are unthinkable without the preceding considerations and work produced about house/space/order/and structure.

With “Screeps” entitled works are on both sides of a wall mounted sieves made of rubber or polyurethane. They are fixed with tie rods and springs. The tie rods are inserted into the wall through holes, helical compression springs and anchor nuts have visual function and keep the grid surfaces with distance from the wall.

The “Halos” are wall-mounted, disc like aluminum parts from mechanical engineering, sometimes colored

painted, which are held by anchor rods anchor bolts and large conical coil springs through the perforated wall on both sides. The viewer only sees one side, thus only one half of the wall sculpture.

Organic and geomorph sculptures (since 2001)

Without direct reference to house and construction, resulting from the association of the cartographic appearance of the Canary Islands in 2001 I made a biomorphic sculpture group. "Stool Archipelago" and "Island growth" generate their formation from the image of an archipelago. The in 2008 produced "Stump stools" are unthinkable without an experience I had in Tenerife: near the sea, far from relevant vegetation, I saw two powerful stump sections. This strange situation moved me to do the "Stump stools", made of fiberglass, realized on the base of known organic forms. They are black, abstract imitated tree stumps. The individual objects of the ten-piece group can be regrouped as well as in the sculpture group "Island Growth" and used as seating elements as needed.

Wrong water (since 2003)

in 2003 I began the color photo series entitled with "Wrong water" with the motif of ships and boats that are on land in urban or rural areas. Unlike the photo series "Scrap metal & Sun" these boats on land are not wrecks. The occurrence of the boats on land, grows with the fact of their growing irrelevance in the professional daily use by fishermen. These boats are not near the water, waiting for them to come back to the sea next day. They are located on land like the fish out of water. Would they be in the water, you could see them only halfway. On land, now useless and pointless, they show their true form and are in dialogue with their foreign environment. (Page 54-63)

Single-room-house (since 2006)

in 2006 I began the color photo series entitled with "One-Room-House" of small buildings in the Landscapes of the Canary Islands. The motif: smallest houses apparently unused and individually isolated in the landscape. Quite different than the big houses and multi-functional building complexes, they are prototypes of one architectural space. These unique buildings are alone in a suggestive dialogue with their purely scenic surroundings. (Page 66-73)

Eras – rain collecting areas on Lanzarote (since 2008)

In 1982 I visited Lanzarote for the first time. I was impressed by the idiosyncratic beauty of the island, which is characterized by water shortage. This is also reflected back into the appropriate structures and designs to collect rainwater. So it was common in the past, that any paved area at the house (roof and yard) had a tendency to direct the rainwater in an underground tank. In addition they put on large and very large cemented surfaces on mountain slopes, in order to capture additional rainwater. In 1982 it seemed to me that these facilities were still in use.

On my second stay in Lanzarote in 2006 I noticed these rain collecting surfaces again. Most of them in meantime are no longer maintained and cared. The water comes now, as everywhere, from the pipeline. Fascinated by the now useless surface structures I realized two interventions. These interventions emphasized the originality of each rain collecting area, as they let these fields become a striking eye-catcher. For the first time I was aware that these interventions, sooner or later, would be seen on the internet in Google Earth. What was the case after one year. (Page 186-193 and 204-2017)

Eberhard Bosslet 2009