

Eberhard Bosslet

EN - Pagel, David: Eberhard Bosslet, Karl Bornstein Gallery, in: Artscribe, März/April 1990, S. 82.

ARTSCRIBE, Magazine, March-April 1990, P. 82, by DAVID PAGEL

Eberhard Bosslet

KARL BORNSTEIN GALLERY

In the 60s, Donald Judd's pristine stacks of metallic boxes reiterated the invariable order of machine production, and Andy Warhol's casual stacks of oversized Brillo boxes mimicked the unquenchable frenzy of commodity consumption. In the 80s, Eberhard Bosslet's disembowelled filing cabinets and painterly mutations based on computer circuitry defy such direct comparison with the basic facts of modern economics. Instead, they record transformations in systems of information transmission. While Minimalism and Pop increasingly appear to be two sides of the same coin, Bosslet's common office fixtures, industrial-strength construction materials, and billboard-sized graphic designs resist inclusion in this simple dialectic of production and consumption. Rather than exploring one side of this worn equation, like his 60s forebears, or even, like his contemporaries Ashley Bickerton and Allan McCollum, playing the material force of industrial production (with its daunting raw materials and labour's transformative potential) against the manipulative power of advertising's eye-grabbing packaging, Bosslet proposes a shift in paradigms by undertaking an exploration of the organisation of information. In an age infamous for insider trading and rampant mismanagement, percentage-hungry intermediaries and interminable litigation, his works argue that data and facts are today's invaluable possessions, and that access to information, rather than to consumer goods or the means of production, defines contemporary power.

Bosslet's inside-out filing cabinets, whose once orderly drawers have been extracted from their runners, wedged together with roughly cut chunks of timber, bound by taut bands of metal strapping tape, and balanced on their overturned exteriors in symmetrical configurations, register the exuberance and hope that accompany the overthrow of any established order. Part of the power of these almost-elegant, nondescript things derives from their prior identities as instruments of bureaucratic control. By transforming the storage spaces of faceless statistics and incontrovertible records into playful geometric abstractions, Bosslet exacts his revenge on symbols of monotonous order and stultifying rationality: his works return spontaneity and whim to a realm that has banished idiosyncrasy and deviance from its alphabetised files, unimaginative reports, and blasé dossiers.

Misdirected aggression, however, undermines Bosslet's project. Although his reconfigured objects are undeniably rebellious, their subversiveness gives way to the fact that they merely display a variety of stylish permutations on a single, fixed model. Bosslet's effigies of office equipment do not attack actual repositories of information, or symbolically engage contemporary technologies of information processing, but act out, in the arena of artistic representation, the overthrow of an atavistic filing system. In a sense, Bosslet's exploration of re-ordered information has been pre-empted by the system he attempts to subvert: with its essential information already transferred to computer software, this system's hegemony is not challenged by the romantic gestures of the individual artist, but strengthened by its tasteful renewals of its discarded artifacts. The detritus of its outmoded organisation made into sculpture, the operations and procedures of this system's new forms remain secret.

Bosslet's micro-chip-like images in sculpture and wall sculptures resembling the circuitry of gigantic computers begin to address these complex technologies of information processing. Rather than giving form to new modes of organisation, however, these cumbersome works subsume new systems of information transmission into an outdated industrialist aesthetic. Made from the heavy-duty materials of industrial production—crudely stitched textiles, galvanized steel grids, cast copper, poured asphalt, and raw wood—they deny advanced computer technology its awesome and often invisible powers. By exclusively focusing on the physical supports of office organisation, on the raw materials of industrialism, and on the external appearance of micro-chips, Bosslet's works fall short of addressing the radical transformations computer technology has wrought on the systems in which information is disseminated and withheld. His paintings and sculptures represent a single individual's low-tech struggle to give form to high-tech transformations that have yet to be comprehended, let alone represented.

