

Eberhard Bosslet

EN - Dingli, Ann; Interview on the exhibition at Valletta Contemporary, Malta 2018

VALLETTACONTEMPORARY

ARTIST INTERVIEWS:

EBERHARD BOSSLET

On the 6th July 2018, Valletta Contemporary (VC) unveils its second solo show, *IMPORT/EXPORT*, featuring the works of internationally-renowned artist Eberhard Bosslet (b. 1953). Bosslet's practice includes painting, light art, installation art, site-specific interventions, sculpture and photography, and he has been the recipient of both the Bremer Art Award and the Hans-Purrmann Award. He has exhibited at documenta 8, as well as many high-profile exhibitions throughout Europe, USA and Australia, recently including TEA – Espacio de Las Artes in Spain, Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin, Sprengel Museum Hannover, Saarländermuseum Saarbrücken, Kunstverein Düsseldorf in Germany, Künstlerhaus Bregenz in Austria and Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in The Netherlands. Bosslet is also a professor of Sculpture and Spatial Concepts at the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts.

IMPORT/EXPORT will include three of Bosslet's works, the first of which – entitled *Supporting Measures/Unterstützende Maßnahmen* – will be representative of his heavily construction-based practice. The second – *Home Lighting/Heimleuchten* – will be a light-art installation built using elements of public holiday streetlight decorations. Finally, a third will take the form of a sculpture ensemble made from polystyrene fish cooler boxes and coloured tape – the title of this final work, *IMPORT/EXPORT – Deep sea boogie woogie*, shares its name with the entire exhibition. Viewers will be invited to experience Bosslet's signature use of industrial materials in large-scale sculptures, which individually alter the physicality of the environment in which they sit. Steel props, neon lighting, polystyrene, and tape replace traditional supports and pigment to pull focus onto the lifespan of commercial resources. In this interview, Ann Dingli speaks to Bosslet about the upcoming show and his unique material-sourcing process.

Ann Dingli (AD): Your work is largely characterised by the industrial/commercial materials chosen to create it. Can you talk about how you select your materials – how do you source them, what research do you do to understand which materials will give you the physical attributes you desire?

Eberhard Bosslet (EB): My choice of material depends on my interests. My interests are motivated by states, circumstances and processes to which I react with sensory reflexes, or which elicit a critical interest. Since our world – a man-made world – is made up of profane things and materials, which stimulate and excite particular circumstances and conditions, so my materials and methods of application in my art are equally profane. I am interested in the construction of buildings and their accompanying circumstances, of private, public, indoor and outdoor spaces.

AD: How is your process affected by the materials you work with? Does their weight, the tools you need to use to manipulate them, and the space you need to contain the materials inform the ideas in your mind when you set out to create a composition?

EB: My artistic plot is based on the phenomena that I want to engage myself with, and those which I believe will be of interest to viewers. I always try to keep it simple. Everyone can do what I do. Often skilled craftsmen can do it better than I can, which is why I let them help me out.

The size and the weight of the materials I use does not matter to me when I'm making decisions. What needs to be done, should and can be realised. I do not think about artistic compositions as such.

AD: Your show at VC includes three works. What was your selection criteria for the exhibition?

EB: Since 1985, I've had a set of works that I am able to produce all over the world within a short time, with the help of sponsors. Mostly, I can borrow free technical equipment and materials on site wherever I am. If the created work cannot be sold within the exhibition time, the loaned systems and materials will go back to the lender. Drawings, photos and parts-lists make it possible for me to build a similar work later in another location. It is comparable to a musical composition or a theatre

play – the works can be reinterpreted and thus re-performed.

My selection criteria was formed on the basis of what could be procured in Malta and then technically and formally realised in the premises of VC.

AD: A lot of the work you create is site-specific, does the work you are showing in Valletta take on a new dimension owing to its new spatial context?

EB: Only one work in the exhibition will be site specific. It is installed in the exhibition space, so it absorbs the dimension of the space and restructures it. It will be a work from the group of supporting measures, using steel props and building construction panels. The second work I'm showing will use decorative street-lighting elements I've borrowed from a local provider. This work is therefore indirectly site specific. In the third work, I use polystyrene fish coolers and packing tapes which I looked for in Malta. This work is also, therefore, only indirectly related to the location.

AD: Malta at the moment is going through a construction overhaul. There is a big national debate on the over-development of the islands, the eradication of our natural environment and heritage. Do you think that this public discourse will feed into the viewers' reading of your work in light of its chosen materials?

EB: No, I visited Malta for a week a year ago, and now am only staying for another week. That's not enough time to develop a truly Malta-specific work.

AD: Often you return the materials used in your works to their original context. Do you feel as though this process is an extension of the artworks themselves? Is the environment and its conservation a theme that you would like viewers to consider when experiencing your art?

EB: Yes, borrowing and returning as a resource-conserving aspect is a conceptual component of my actions. And, yes, if the viewer reaches an understanding of my work, I would agree if this theme forms part of that understanding.

AD: Finally, do you think you will be exploring the islands in search of new materials for future works?

EB: No, as I said, I would have to be here for longer.