

Eberhard Bosslet

EN - Gercke, Hans: Eberhard Bosslet, Catalog of the Heidelberger Kunstvereins, Heidelberg 1987.

EBERHARD BOSSLET, Kunstverein Heidelberg, Catalog , by HANS GERCKE

Opportunity for Perception

In an early contribution entitled „WAHR-NEHMEN" (the German word for "perceive", containing the German words for "true" and "take" or "seize"), Eberhard Bosslet dealt with the phenomenon of light. In a factory hall in Speyer, the West German town where Bosslet was born and still lives and works, visitors were subjected to hot-and-cold-shower style switches from complete darkness to glittering brightness. Electric circuits coated with phosphorescent paint flashed in the dark. Spotlights scanned the room, playing up its structural forms with rectangle, circle, line and checker grid. Projections contrasted the reality of space against its, fragmented image. The year was 1979.

Four years later, in the brilliant light of the Canary Islands, Bosslet traced the contours of fragments of ruins in white paint. "INTERVENTIONS" is the name the artist gave to this type of painting, which by directly "intervening" in the landscape produced oddly ambivalent results.

That which already existed, or preexisted, was pointed out; that which hitherto had gone unnoticed was now made manifest, a "coincidental" state of destruction was brought to our awareness, a moment fixed in time, a situation defined, "delineated". At the same time, however, something new and highly artificial was born, an image reversing the way in which images were traditionally viewed: not the illusion of space in a two-dimensional plane, but rather the imaginary reality of a drawn plane in three-dimensional space.

The ambivalence of real and - in a literal sense, from imago, "image" - imaginary relationships between space and plane, between a given situation and its artificial interpretation (it too an "intervention", that is, an interference, an impingement): these are themes that are present in all of Bosslet's works, whether they fall under the category of painting, free-standing plastic art, or the so called "Supporting Measures".

The gradual shift away from the usual terminology is no mere coincidence. True, the traditional term "painting"

does indeed cover what Eberhard Bosslet so very specifically fashions using the elements of this medium, that is, with lines, surfaces, colour, material and associative or actual spatial reference. This aspect will be dealt with in greater depth in another article in this book.

But the terms "plastic art" or "sculpture", usually imprecisely used as synonyms, no longer convey the full import to these objects. If "plastic art" (from the Greek) signifies the building up of a form out of amorphous matter, an additive procedure determined by formative forces, by pressure and counterpressure, then "sculpture" (from the Latin sculpere) means, by contrast, the laying bare of something that latently or at least potentially already exists, by means of destruction, i.e.,

14

the removal of material. A general term, comparable to "painting", referring to works of art in the three-dimensional realm is not in common use.

Bosslet's free-standing plastic art is "plastic" in the sense that it is created through an additive process, but there is no hint of a shaping or moulding in a traditional sense. Rather, this process is comparable to that of constructing, of putting something together using preexistent parts. In this, of course, Bosslet is by no means alone. These objects are architectonic in character, they contain space, spaces; but there are also certain aspects, primarily concerning the aforementioned parts or elements, by which they are linked to painting.

Like the other group, the "SUPPORTING MEASURES", they are variable, can be assembled according to the building-block principle, can be modified and taken apart again; and they too consist of components which are preexistent and predetermined and whose ordinary function is by no means so very different from the use they are put to here. Thus, not so much an "alienation" in the usual sense as, again, the ambivalence, briefly mentioned above, of an emphasizing, a pinpointing, a defining and making perceptible on the one hand, and the creation, on the other hand, of something different, something new. But this means - only seemingly in contradiction to the process of pinpointing and defining an opening and an expanding, where ambiguity is

articulated as something unequivocal.

Something else Bosslet's free-standing "plastics" share with the "Supporting Measures" group is the clarity of a constructively defined sculpture; despite their variability, however, they differ from the other group in their hermetic character, their relative autonomy from their surroundings.

The "Supporting Measures", by contrast, have the character of an installation; they are concretely related to a given space, from which they cannot be detached without losing their identity. A new installation, however, in a different, yet comparable context, is possible. These works do not stand by themselves; their fascination lies in the force that is concretized in them in relation to their position in the space or room they occupy: seemingly supporting the ceiling, they are in actuality pushing against it, pushing something upward, resisting gravity - in fact, pinning a weighty metal filing cabinet against the ceiling. No wonder there is something about this tightly ordered hard Bosslet has named one of his newer works after this forest of steel-pipe ceiling supports that reminds one of a chamfered pilaster or Gothic stave work; and almost of their own accord there arise associations with man, upright gait is not only in defiance of the fall, the inevitable sinking back to Earth. Beyond this, man also has always been regarded as one who bears a burden, who cannot raise himself up at will into the openness of an empty, airy sky, not only because he is pressed down onto Earth by the relentless weight of that sky.

The ancient Greeks and Romans considered the column a symbol of Atlas, the Titan who bears upon his broad shoulders the weight of the heavens. And indeed, Eberhard Bosslet has named one of his newer works after this giant, thus raising a theme that is not only pivotal in the realm of architecture but also, surprisingly enough, places these so strictly constructive works, which are quite at home in the world of the technical, in the same context as classical sculpture: man's upright gait, the dynamic statics of his outer shell and thus of his entire existence has been a dominating theme of European sculpture since antiquity.

Hans Gercke Translation: Katharine Cofer