

Eberhard Bosslet

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On Eberhard Bosslet's Painting

Painting is of importance for Eberhard Bosslet's entire artistic work. One can easily get the impression that his painting and several of his sculptural pieces (in particular the "Supportive Measures") reciprocally supplement each other, that they both treat architectonic ideas and thus strive for a common goal. There are reasons to support this impression; it is, however, not limited to the statement that painting ends up being sculpture or is possibly only an echo of concepts which Bosslet develops spatially in his sculptural works. It would indeed be misleading to view his painting solely as ground plans for sculpture or other three-dimensional shapes.

Granted, the utensils which Bosslet employs are somewhat unexpected. He does not use oil and canvas, but instead, e.g., zinc primer coating, a primer coating of plaster, bitumen, zincsulfide, adhesive tape, lacquer, and tin coated with zinc by hot-dip galvanisation. Even if this list of materials does sound more suitable for a construction site than an art work, there is still no doubt that the end product is art and belongs primarily to the realm of painting, more so than to sculpture or architecture. However, the artist's theme deals in an unusual manner with the "existence of painting" in space, so, obviously, there is a connection to architecture and the artist's spatial works after all.

Bosslet endeavors to join up painting in physiological space (defining size, height and width) with painting in the space described by Richard Neutra as that which we were "born into as feeling observers". Bosslet's painting tunes in on the latter since it also implicitly includes our experience, emotions, cognition, and a wealth of sensory perception.

To understand the artist's pictures, the observer must pay attention to two qualities. The first deals with the spatial appearance of the picture: it has a large format, ubiquitous two-part organisation, simple, clear shapes, and seems almost monumental from a distance. The second quality deals with the abstract and concrete functions that the picture imposes upon its surroundings: they become the locality and stage for the comparison and confrontation of objects.

Usually frameless and occasionally flush with the wall, Bosslet's pictures show rather large, geometrical shapes. The figures themselves are all painted with industrial paints, the paint frequently being applied very thickly and often with quite sober, everyday colors. As for the backing, Bosslet likewise turns from the traditional "art" material of canvas and instead paints and "detaches" his shapes onto solid panelling which he often finds in his surroundings. Some examples of his troves would be a polyethylene slab removed from a picture-mount cutter, plastic flooring material, aluminium-layered tar paper generally used as insulation material under roofs, or tin coated with zinc by hot-dip galvanisation. The painting

surfaces, of which Bosslet chooses two for each of his pictures, were all originally non-artistic building materials, and, stemming from a different sphere of reality, amount to what Hildebrandt terms "independent surfaces". They have their own personality as a working material. Because of their past, they evoke associations, and yet they are very down-to-earth. They supply the sculpturally tangible "foundation for existence" for the painting and are themselves objects, a bodily "something", solid material, and their own space.

The painted shape appears, visible to everyone, on a foundation predetermined by its materials. The background, customarily the main support for any picture, continues its existence as an independent environment

and an excerpt chosen by the artist from a much greater abstract space. The shape painted onto it is an attached constituent of a space initially foreign to it. Because of the backing's own peculiar spatial qualities, the shape

amounts to painted separation, and yet at the same time expresses a desire for union with the background. The geometric figures express - and yet overcome - this dichotomy. The picture's inner space is the initial arena for the shapes and backing to come to terms with one another. In addition, and as a direct result of this, the relationship of the figures to the backing can be generalised to include the entire abstract space outside the painting, since the backing embodies this "outer" space. Thus, painting leaves the traditional duality of surface

and space. In fact, the suspicion pops into mind - and is soon confirmed - that Bosslet's pictures are programmed to reject current attempts to re-establish this traditional duality. Each of his pictures becomes an abstract-concrete "double-figure". Via the volume of the backing, the painting itself embodies the paradox of real, outer space within the picture. The basis for the painting's spatial existence lies in this "double-figure", which overcomes the tendencies to diverge and separate. A linguistic example of this would be setting some sentence parts within parentheses. Although within the sentence unity and in close proximity, they are still separated basically and functionally from the rest.

There are two varying concepts at the heart of Bosslet's

treatment of space and painting. They can be traced back to traditional definitions of panel painting and those of murals or wall painting. If necessary, they can be clearly delineated and separated. Bosslet, however, forces their dualistic association and comparison. It is almost obligatory that a kind of Siamese coexistence results - a new condition requiring a rather complicated manner of perception when dealing with the question of the "existence of painting" in space.

To clarify the trigger effects of Bosslet's painting, we shall examine a picture entitled "LIC 6/86 X", dated 1986 (page 29). The materials used for the picture are: asphalt, lacquer purchasable in any paint shop and suitable for the finishing coat for wood or metal, and two only slightly different-sized polyethylene panels upon which the artist painted. There are holes drilled through the panels so that they may be screwed or nailed into the wall. One panel is hung above the other, their edges touching evenly. Since their surfaces are not perfectly flat, the panels are not completely flush with the wall. There are three large-sized, geometrical shapes on the picture, and it has a top, a bottom, and left and right. The rectangular, blackish shape on the lower left (asphalt on red lacquer) immediately reminds the observer of a ground plan. Vague, imaginary spatial projections from a bird's eye view come to mind. At the same time, this shape can also be considered as an abstract wall ornament, as a fragment or an excerpt from a stylised meandering pattern moving

in a certain direction. Both ways of looking at the shape command our attention. They stem from one shape and yet they are two separate, fully developed entities. They coexistent in a double-figure. On the one hand, it is a ground plan or, in other words, the two-dimensional projection of a space. On the other hand it is part of a meandering pattern, an abstract element of wall painting such as passed down to us over the ages. As early as Greek Antiquity, painters made frequent use of geometrical art in covering seemingly unlimited wall space with a continuous, flowing band.

The ground plan lays claim to sculptural, three-dimensional potentiality and is an "inward" form at rest. In contrast, the meandering pattern restrains a wall surface's

tendency to expand optically and causes it fall back upon itself. The meandering pattern is an active, "outward" form. Although Bosslet's painted shape suggests a ground plan and a decorative band, it is in fact neither of them in the picture space. It ignores the separation between limited picture surface and seemingly unlimited wall surface. Instead, it partakes of the potential of both and, "attached" onto the solid panel and "tangible" because of Bosslet's tactile way of painting, it becomes its own basic structure with its own space.

Both of the other shapes in the picture deal with a related topic, but approach it from different vantage points. The shape on the lower right (aluminium paint over asphalt) deriving from a cube makes use of perspective to give

the illusion of architecture. The aluminium-painted shape has been cut and bevelled so as to appear sculptural. However, the varying measurements do not correspond. They need not be accurate, though. What counts is the potential of an illusionistic, three-dimensional shape. Bosslet uses this figure to characterise and disclose space as an artistically manipulatable appearance with simulated "inward" and "outward" qualities.

Thus, the artist places a second basic structure next to the first. Together, they make reference to the oscillation between surface and illusionistic reproduction of space in painting.

Bosslet places a third structure on its own picture backing above both of these basic structures. This third one

(lacquer on aluminium paint and asphalt) occupies the entire allotted space and reminds one of a technical device in the broadest sense of the word. It could be derived from a switch board relief. It is the only one of the three shapes that seems to be a flat surface. It is not a ground plan that could potentially be extended into space, nor is it intended to restrict surface expansion, nor is it suitable to feign spatial depth. Like the other two shapes, it too is a priori an illustrative shape in as much as it is registered in our consciousness as a "surface" shape (the others being a "space" shape and a "space and surface" shape). With this third "surface" shape, the artist diverts us from overly abstract thoughts concerning space and surface and simulates appealing simplicity. It is

interesting to note that this happens via a shape which was conceivably derived from relay technology. The "existence of painting" in space is a topic in all of Bosslet's works. It should be considered as a process of continuous converging, whereby the painted shapes and space come closer and closer to each other. The picture space itself, the backing for the painting, is the locality and stage for this process of converging and for the documentation of the condition of fluxuation of the objects. (This offers an explanation for the occasional joining of the shapes on the lower half of Bosslet's pictures.) In addition, the picture backing is its own double. - Bosslet paints a condition of "becoming" as in the situation described above, whose importance is based upon the at-

tempted unification of two fundamentally different forms of existence and possibilities of painting. In this interesting and convincing manner, Bosslet thus loosens the fetters about the inner and outer space of the picture and clearly points out the interdependence of both. Neither will ever be able to exist alone.

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