

Eberhard Bosslet

EN - Uthemann, Ernest W.: Catalog of the Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken, D 2006

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The World as Drawing Grounds

Is an objet trouvé really a serendipitous discovery? Pablo Picasso who coined the phrase "I do not seek. I find!" probably really stumbled upon the similarity between a toy car and a baboon's skull quite by accident; it was by chance that he noticed that the handlebars and saddle of a bicycle, in a certain constellation, recall a bull's head. But Marcel Duchamp consciously (s)elects the most ordinary items to provoke his audience when he designed his Fountain and Bottle Rack. And while Arno Schmidt kept note boxes, many contemporary artists amass archives of the most diverse items, which might not yet be allocated to any specific visual concept at the moment of the decision to hoard them, but their sometimes immense proportions indicate at least a vague expectation of future relevance, and hence artistic intentions.

Eberhard Bosslet does not find. He seeks. One may assume that, on observing certain objects, like the variety of street lights in Dresden, or umpteen wrecked cars on the Canary Islands, the artist begins to ponder upon how he might employ these items for artistic purposes, but that is already precisely the point: an isolated discovery is useless for Bosslet's purposes. Only the accumulation or repetition of objects allows the artist to give them shape and form. A wrecked VW Beetle enthroned upon a cliff above an indigo ocean is no doubt a picturesque sight, and one which a tourist might possibly also take a snapshot of. But for Bosslet such an apparition triggers a quest, driven by the observation that cars left abandoned in the countryside are not unusual in this region. A perfect prerequisite for a picture-series! Already the second discovery of this kind, the second photograph, metamorphoses something found (objet trouvé) into something sought (objet cherché). The street lamps provoke a similar situation: the thought of an accumulation, a "coppice" of lighting devices initiates a search for all the various types of street lamps in Dresden.

Alone the accumulation or series as such causes a transformation, or even a "transubstantiation" of the "found items". A photograph does not automatically turn a thing into an aesthetic item, and a single street lamp erected in a public space lacks the specific quality of contradiction and rededication evoked, for example, by a urinal placed on a pedestal at an art exhibition. The various Canary Islands series, the photo sequences Reformierungen (Re/formations), Begleiterscheinungen (Side Effects) and Vespacolor, exemplify Bosslet's approach. The artist obviously intervenes; he edits the found items. Concrete structures, architectural and tectonic discoveries are highlighted with colour before being photographed; in Begleiterscheinungen (1984) black spaces are painted onto the walls of abandoned houses, acting as counterparts to the gaping holes where windows once were. The advance of artistic intervention becomes most apparent in the 1982 photo-series Vespacolor. The artist's originally orange motor-scooter is first painted in various shades and placed against backgrounds of vividly coloured façades with bright shutters and the like, and then begins to change colour itself during the series: suddenly it is no longer multicoloured but white. And finally, the ambiance changes colour too. Thus large cactuses standing behind the Vespa fade to muted pastel. This type of intervention in the "stationary" aspects of the image (including the aforementioned highlighting) also alters their status as elements of staged photography to works of art in public space. And almost casually, even in his photo-series, Bosslet expresses his own self-image: that of being a painter. Simultaneously the photographs change their character - for the spectator the borders between staged and documentary photography blend: are they autonomous works, or visual records of an artistic project? In this respect the conceptual aspect of Bosslet's works (and this applies generally) is on the same level of importance as their perceivable presence.

The photo-series crystallise an artistic strategy that can be observed throughout Bosslet's works. The artist is magnetised by certain objects due to their image potential; he seeks and collects them and begins to customise them, while never altering them thus that their original form is no longer discernible.

This also applies to those works that are above all conceived as "painting with other media", like the wall hangings and the Schürzen (Aprons). On the subject of the former, Ellen Seifermann writes: "Eberhard

Bosslet's pictures are painting, not in the sense of a strict genre description, but as an aesthetic practice and attitude. Like his sculptures and installations they rely on the principle of cumulative montage and composition of existing technical media."¹

In some works a further aspect accrues, namely the momentum of an associative redefinition of substance, but here too, without concealing the original purpose of the employed elements. Hockerarchipel (Chair Archipelago) consists of ordinary plastic garden ponds, upturned, coloured by the artist and distributed about the room like islands. To a certain extent the effect is "surreal": the objects alter their existence as precisely definable things, they adopt a "double life", making their interpretation multifold. In the case of Hockerarchipel at least three different perceptions are possible: it can be seen as garden ponds, seats or a cluster of islands. At the same time, of course, it is an autonomous work of art that is not defined by the employed media, the plastic implications, or any theoretical functions. Even a painting can be defined as a "thing in the world of things" due to its existence in the form of paint on canvas, but not as a work of art.

This aspect is also apparent in *Unterstützende Maßnahmen* (Supporting Measures) and comparable works. While the function of the braces is an essential element of their appearance since it constitutes their relationship to the exhibition space concerned, the artistic "added value" is to be sought in precisely this reference, which simultaneously visualises the object's original purpose and frees it of its predefined determination by integrating it in an artwork that exists without further functionality.

Bosslet paints in these works too: in *Unterstützende Maßnahmen* by using the interplay of light and shadow; in other sculptures assembled with elements pertaining to the building trade by means of their colours, and in the light collections by manipulating their fluorescent capacity in space. Here an almost paradoxical force enters: while a large proportion of Bosslet's works have technoid undertones, and although the industrially generated "building blocks" utilised are multitudinous, technological aspects never take on the decisive role that they did with Dadaist *objets trouvés* or in Pop Art. On the other hand, the depersonalising aspect of, for example, classical concrete art, that targets cool comprehension is absent. And this too is related to the fact that Bosslet is basically always a painter, even in works when he has not applied any paint to any surface. For his works are always pictures, drawings or paintings expanding in space; and while their medium may at first seem surprising, after a little contemplation it occurs to the viewer that the inherent ideal of all painting has probably always been to use the world as drawing grounds. And in this sense, *objets trouvés*, *objets cherchés* are things that primarily just seem to serve the purpose of bringing the world into the picture, but they are at least equally to be considered projection surfaces reflecting the image we have of the world.

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