

Eberhard Bosslet

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HUMPTY DUMPTY'S KALEIDOSCOPE, A New Generation Of German Artists, Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney, 1993, Catalog, P.17,34,58,59, by Bernice Murphy

To turn to some other artists in the present exhibition: works such as those of Eberhard Bosslet (also formerly living in Berlin), Fritz Heisterkamp, and Wolfgang Robbe open up a new set of resources through their engagement of a language built through the structures of late modernity. Their works insist on an awareness of the new social and industrial frameworks within which objects are now made and our experience of them is conditioned: bureaucratic and technocratic systems of planning and supply; the trans-local organisation of materials, labour and goods.

Eberhard Bosslet's sculptures belong to a long constructivist tradition in twentieth sculpture, but their materials and syntax are very different from their early forebears. In the case of these works they are built up not from the products of an earlier phase of industrial technology and secondary industries, but from the tertiary structures of bureaucratic organisation and information storage: epitomised by filing cabinets. These structures, which configure millions of lives and work-spaces in the honeycombed offices of cities become the means by which he intensifies our perception not only of abstract forms and systems that confront us visually in all parts of the modern world, but also of the coded meanings automatically carried with these objects, through their universal networks of use.

Bosslet's sculptures define our constant, casual exposure to the elements of their making, and our increasing distance from uniquely constructed things made of organic materials. They bring into consciousness our experience of a world of indexical structures and globally encompassing production of synthesised units, of ever-expanding systems and interconnected parts. Through concentrating attention on the expressive characteristics revealed by the systems he deploys, Bosslet emphasises a larger context of comprehensive social design and

productivity. His objects express provisionality, contingency and interdependency of human production in the contemporary world. And yet we may return in Eberhard Bosslet's works to the formative sensibility through which such concepts are produced. We may encounter again the perceptions of form history and technologies - and the changes in their usage over time - that are informed by a sculptor's consciousness of the history of forms, and their genealogy within art. In the case of Wolfgang Robbe's works, the social meanings and potential of the tertiary building forms he uses have a much greater importance. Robbe has a greater interest in the interactions between his audience and his works, and their potential to make social, not merely artistic, uses of his objects.

Eberhard Bosslet,

Eberhard Bosslet's sculptures, relating to a tradition that arose from the collage constructions of Picasso and use of manufactured readymades by Duchamp, may also be located in new territories. In the presence of his works one is reminded of the new fields in which contemporary sculptors are working. Instead of being huddled in workshops with hand-tools, sculptors today may be taking sources from office blocks and building sites, or consulting industrial product catalogues. Rather than fashioning raw materials, a sculptor may elect to work exclusively at a stage of tertiary intervention into systems and processes.

Bosslet's works involve a shift of conception beyond the unique combinatory results of cubist readymades, which took on individuality and a romantic aura of presence and subjectivity in their final characteristics. His sculptures - especially the filing-cabinet works and the series of structures and installations deploying elements of cast-concrete formwork used for building construction - have surrendered the territory of romantic autonomy and independent identities, which were still such strong claims within an earlier epoch of modernist sculpture.

Bosslet's sculptures define late-industrial systems of production. They articulate a world of open-ended relationships and ever multiplying structures. His works still result in particularity, but they are enmeshed in systems that surround and continue beyond discrete form. They invoke a larger context of constellations of forms, of interconnecting parts drawn from diverse sites of production, and therefore interplay of pre-existing standardised units to compose new local forms.

At the same time, these are highly considered sculptures. Having shifted attention to new industrial contexts and sources for his work, Bosslet then returns through his procedures to a comprehensive engagement with questions of form and syntax. This occurs as he positions his works in a dialogue with formal sculpture and its modern traditions.

Eberhard Bosslet finds a multitude of forms and sources in contemporary industrial contexts: from compressed-air systems to steel jacking devices and lifting palettes. They provide a variety of structural languages to work with, as well as importing a host of colour and surface features as 'readymade' elements.

What distinguishes Bosslet's sculptures among those of other sculptors who deploy similar materials is not simply the forms he creates or structural systems he articulates. Rather it is his insistent interest in bringing all the elements into a final state of tension of all constituent parts, in various ways intensifying and resisting gravitational and compressive thrusts of energy. It is therefore through a moment of equilibrium or equalisation of forces, a resolution of a series of interventions, that his objects establish their idiosyncratic character and identity, rather than seeking an absolute sovereignty as purely expressive objects.