

## Eberhard Bosslet

EN - Kunde, Harald: Triple assault on baroque masonry, Catalog Material & Effects, Kunsthau Dresden, Jun. 1998

Material & Wirkung, Catalog Kunsthau Dresden, June 1998, by HARALD KUNDE

### Triple assault on baroque masonry

If three artists who have been closely related for many years decide to exhibit together, one might well expect the style of presentation to be more homogeneous than any other generic group show. And, given that all three are founding members of the very same art association, that since 1981 has been a consistent and no-fuss research project as well as the bedrock of their careers, it is clear that such a show will tend to be more of a synopsis of present and past work alike. Beyond its being somewhat of a group-portrait, the exhibition describes a long phase of artistic productivity. Each one of them has irrefutably become an individual artist no longer in need of the collective dynamism so typical for an inchoate group. The three are now in a state of positive mutual competition and reciprocal artistic tension. Architecturally, the Kunsthau Dresden seems to have lent itself perfectly, occasionally even spectacularly well, to the multifarious ideals and conditions of the artists. Housing either single exhibits, group installations or site-specific interventions, its succession of disparately proportioned architectural spaces facilitated an authentic reflection of Material and Effect's inherent creative approach.

This was immediately apparent in the entrance area, with Werner Klotz's Reconstruction of the Gross case after Franz Jung to the left, Otmar Sattel's sublimely translucent Energy flow to the right (in the cashier's office), and the central corridor bearing Eberhard Bosslet's altogether unexpected „painting“ consisting of an ankle-high strip of asphalt running across the central courtyard to the far exit beyond it, and in so doing, changing almost imperceptibly into a catwalk for visitors. The exhibition possesses an argumentative structure, with each individual work not only defining the respective artist's standpoint, but also positing a different thesis. Areas where works overlap seem to suggest possible moments of synthesis. Particularly Eberhard Bosslet responds actively to the Kunsthau's architectural precepts, having conceived a total of four works specifically for Dresden. He has most certainly succeeded in investing the courtyard with a hitherto unimaginable aura. His idiosyncratic appropriation and insolent extension of a decidedly industrial painting technique into the more noble realm of the gallery, is overshadowed by a vast awning, a bright orange canopy precariously held on the verge of collapse by a sort of pneumatic support. The sculpture is an exemplary model of the forces of gravity, moreover disclosing a programmatic embrace of an array of construction details (such as powerpoint, compressor, wall-mounts, and ultimately transcending the arithmetic laws imposed by statics. Here, material is literally in a state of suspense; within the artist's body of work dealing with pneumatic instruments, the Dresden piece undoubtedly defines a moment of lofty levitation. Upstairs Bosslet installed four swing-doors, harmonizing in colour with the awning. The barriers' swinging motion additionally disrupts the space, which is narrow enough as it is, thus heightening the visitor's physical experience of it as a bottleneck.

Furthermore, Bosslet boxed in the folding screen door which Gunther Uecker studded in situ with thousands of nails for his 1996 show. Just as Uecker's work now exists only in the memory of those who know of it, Bosslet's unprimed plaster panels will later function as wall space when they get a coat of paint. However, Bosslet's work characteristically implies quite the contrary. He is actually seeking to relocate industrially manufactured objects and materials. Removed from the domain of functionalism, their redefined, seemingly coincidental relationship instils them with a different meaning, now working as metaphorical aggregates in the reverberating context of art and interpretation. Obvious examples include Glory, a bilateral composition of two circular industrial casts held in equilibrium through a wall, Soft Life IX, consisting of various compressed and flattened materials, as well as configurations and networks of pipes and hoses (Open 11 in the vaulted room, Distributor I in the courtyard, Induction I in the main hall). Without exception prototypes for sculptures consisting of potential energy, these works imply cycles without literally depicting flowing substances, such as honey pumps at work for instance. Indeed, vacuum-sealed pipes are seen transferring nothing at all. Systems of

intertwined hoses lead through loops and entanglements back to their origin. Matter seems entirely self-reflexive and self-absorbed, illustrating the generally applicable notion of the vicious cycle, innate to and omnipotent within civilization and nature alike, and certainly dominant within the thoughts of those aware of crisis.

Similarly, Werner Klotz deals with the nature and effect of crises, however consciously sublimating his observations to irritate the senses. An opulent phantasmagoria of reflections awaits the visitor at the gallery's entrance. Based on the psychodrama of the literary figure of Gross, it operates as a visual celebration of self-decay and disorientation, drawing the viewer into the vortex of a distorted self-portrait, and by extension into the very core of Gross' latent madness. The names of people and places of the latter's journey through life are seen floating in columns of glass tanks, generating a giddy stream of memories and associations, as known to all urban nomads. In its attempt to mimic a quasi-scientific method of observation, *Instrument* is clearly less introspective and more typically Klotz, heightening the viewer's awareness of the subjective contingency of his own vision. The water-filled construct turns into an unnerving quest to get things into focus as the experimentee tries to perceive the buildings outside. Merely the attached earpiece, vaguely transmitting street noises, serves as a reminder of sensory unity. Both *Binocular* and *Intellectual's trap* fit into the thematic context implied above. Rather than offering the expected close-up of what is in the far distance, the former thrusts the viewer into blindness, whilst the latter, a both beautiful and futile apparatus of scientific frivolity, reflects one eye singly and mirrors the other *ad infinitum*. Kinetic pieces such as *Perpetuum mobile* and *Anemone* define another area of Klotz's work. Self-legitimized by the very fact that they function, the viewer is mesmerized by unfurling buds as petal-like segments revolve, opening and closing again: interaction within a self-referential system. After such contemplative moments, Klotz invites us to embark on an imaginary journey along with the retinue of Dionysus. A mirrored box at first glance recalling a sober work of minimal art, discloses a maddening kaleidoscope of bottles and glasses within, an image which is also endlessly multiplied by mirrors. Although Dionysus' *Travel Bar* presents utensils of intoxication and ecstasy with such Apollonian discipline, the over-density of reflections draws the viewer into a giddy hallucination, which, as Klotz so frequently achieves, serves to convert apparent certainties into something beyond comprehension.

Similarly, Ottmar Sattel's experiments, implicating conceivably timeless processes are also concerned with an exploration of the imponderable. Biochemical cycles of fermentation, decay and osmosis form the centre about which this artist constructs his self-consciously industrial and generally voluminous installations. *Energy flow V*, already mentioned above, appears at first as little more than a simple four-sided column of glass, glowing from within. At closer inspection however, one discovers that various types of leaves have been pressed between panes of photosensitized glass, and that the organic processes of transformation at work here form the sculpture's artistic message. The impressive *The Light II* is based on the same principle. Here, time and space are forcibly unified in a demonstration of transmogrification as eight horizontally affixed factory floodlights cast their glare on a stretch of pressed foliage, causing this to gradually wither and ultimately rot over the course of the exhibition. The impeccable symmetry of fern fronds shining through, coupled with the diodes' discomfiting hum and the sight and sound of partially cracked glass beneath the heat of the lights succeed in investing the work with quite a hazardous atmosphere indeed, reminiscent of a laboratory about to explode. There are other works however boasting configurations of hoses and rubbery bulbous outgrowths dealing with fermentation and gases, that are, paradoxically enough, somewhat cooler. *Balance III* in the main hall is an exemplary embodiment of fundamental aspects of Sattel's art. The massiveness of the stacked barrels and the steel shelving is in direct static contrast to the long pole, precariously balanced on a single point, and the floating balloons. The material's outer surface itself is what bears witness of the concealed inner activities of fermentation. Spanning an overall height of seven metres, *Soul I* comprises several balloons and a system of hoses connecting a barrel beneath with a shackle above, especially conceived to fill the overly difficult and anonymous site of the staircase with a soulful swell. Finally, Sattel discovered the basement to instigate his *Bottle-battle VII* which was quite an experience at the show's opening. Not only those magically drawn to the popping of corks had a great time watching and savouring the result of fermentation spouting to the ceiling, art connoisseurs were likewise willing to embrace the bottle performance as an example of ephemeral sculpture.

The display of photographs and videos in the room at ground level, offer a review of Bosslet's, Klotz's and Sattel's past projects, and serve to demonstrate that land art, the artistic use of unorthodox sites and more conceptually diaristic writings are just as central to *Material and Effect* as are exhibitions in the traditional sense. Far from wanting to embark on an epic celebration, the group of works shown in Dresden were selected to demonstrate the varying principles of these three artists: *Triple assault on baroque masonry* is about concision, precision and vitality.

