

Forming Sculptures Observations from a Distance

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Sculpture, probably more than any of other fine arts, lives from being installed in the here and now, which is sometimes intended to endure for a longer period and sometimes fixed around the specific dates of an exhibition. The implementation of its stance in space is an individual matter. But the space is not entirely complete until it is observed, until one engages with the “spaces” in their movements and ideas, which the artist formulates as a statement and evokes as an impression. Art space and space art: a dialogue that is carried out on many levels and knowingly interrupted.

Finding something out from the space, finding something in the material, finding something in the space, finding something out from material – this movement that doubles back on itself may start at several points. It may start in the space of the environment of the sculptural work, in the work itself, in the forming process or in the place where observations begin anew. As Theodor W. Adorno states in his “Aesthetic Theory”, insight into art means returning objectified spirit through the medium of reflection back into its liquid aggregate state. But reflection itself is always seeking a point of reference, too, seeking something solid, seeking terms that may be depended on at least for a little while. From Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari we know that philosophy is the art of forming, inventing and producing terms. Thus we find ourselves moving in the space of philosophy, in the philosophy of space: thought sculpture. There is something that is evoked in the mind of the observer that wants to understand through experiencing the process of the works and the manipulations made in each particular space, its reconfiguration: how did the plan get into its environment? How would a specific installation develop in a different location? Thought games. A game of reflecting begins with the individual approach attempting to translate itself into general terms: transparent and impenetrable, autonomous and yet referential, near but far the same time, solid and yet hovering... Elisabeth Ballet's works keep the in-between space hovering: here is a gap in which the observer may take a deep breath to ponder and understand. We are modelled by sculptural space and thus become aware of our own position in precisely that distance and proximity which the works both permit and demand. In observing, we are seeking knowledge of the works, a knowledge that does not limit either us or the work, but which does not exclude us either. For Martin Heidegger, this knowledge involving seeing: knowing means to have seen, in the broadest sense of seeing, which means to comprehend that which is present as being present. “Seeing” Elisabeth Ballet's works, in particular, means actually being present, nearing them in space, allowing time for this presence and its effect. (No photographic representation, no matter how good it may be, can mediately translate the spatial impression.) The private dictionary of Elisabeth Ballet's sculptures always plays with the subject of the observer: with the actual definition of the sculpture starting at the edges, at the place where subjectivity seeks its fullness and its limitations in order to define itself. The particular location of the action – be it a maintenance depot for trams in Glasgow, an exhibition room in Munich or a powder magazine in Berwick – becomes itself a sign. Even the titles involve grasping the works, rewriting the space: Face-à-Main (Lorgnette), Deux Bords (Two Edges), Corridor, In a Forest, At the Beach, In the Office, In the Garden, On the Street, Material, Point of View and Perspective, Model, Dot, Line, Imprint... this is not the development of a private mythology, but rather a reflected translational relation: abstractly reduced and actually implemented. Playing with concrete abstraction is already embedded in the terminological fascination of the title: work – descriptions – material, formation process, spatial configuration and term all at the same time. While these titles provide information, they also require more than just reading them. The experiential space of these sculptures is always a kinetic space, thinking begins moving and calls for a translation of sensations and impressions, for an ordering of thoughts.

The internal space and the external space of the space created by each sculpture, these spaces are equal. The seeming transparency of a possible approach plunges the observer into confusion, evaporates as one comes closer, denies itself to the observer in tantalizing proximity that turns into distance. Sculptural space does not impose itself on us, but rather we are the ones who become aware that we are entering an area of thinking and working, who open ourselves to the work by walking around it / walking through it, who are on a journey, entering this art space and leaving it again, sometimes leaving traces of ourselves in the work and sometimes taking something of it with us –

something that may be translated as complex and yet simple experiences.

Art as a plan for possibilities of thinking – in a specific case, on location and in time, playing a space in a way that changes each given space, yet does not write the history of its emergence from this space alone, but rather works it over and, in reflexion, penetrates it and goes beyond it. Like erratic blocks – transparent and yet impenetrable – Elisabeth Ballet's sculptures enter into the space of the world, the space of perception. The composition must stand for itself, must be able to speak for itself. The limitation of a void emerges, filling itself with meaning, precisely from limitation. It is space itself that opens itself up to us, making us aware of it in its state of changing. The blue of the sky and the salt of the earth ...