

Staging Space

Meditative contemplation and Far Eastern philosophy are cornerstones of Fritz Ruprecht's abstract visual world. The artist favors restrained colors, and his stringently geometric use of line engenders a thoroughly graphic effect. In the truest sense, his translucent application of paint allows one to gaze into the depths, accenting the significance of light and shadow in the artist's work. Ruprecht cuts the support, primarily paper and cardboard, into strips and then reassembles them according to defined geometric principles, whereby the surfaces are treated with watercolor, paint and hot wax. In detail, this technique gives rise to unplanned irregularities and coincidental breaks in material and subject, which evoke a striking rhythm and an elegantly simple aesthetic.

Since the late 1990s, Ruprecht has also been realizing conceptual interventions, endeavoring to interact directly with the architecture of exhibition spaces. His numerous stays in Japan and his fascination with the sliding walls of traditional Japanese houses are certainly a point of reference and an inspiration for his installations, which interact with preexisting spatial structures.

Architecture is rooted in an understanding of space, which, in turn, is founded upon a geometric conception of the same. And yet, in its spiritual, theoretical or philosophical dimensions, the perception of space always includes a subjective element. Every human being experiences space and organizes spatial structures from a highly personal perspective. Interaction with space is based not only upon geometric or mathematical assessment, but also upon the individual perception and definition of what space is or could be.

Two Examples

In the secularized Church of St. Peter an der Sperr in Wiener Neustadt, Ruprecht presented an exhibition in 2007 featuring large panels arranged at ninety-degree angles, like a paravent within the space, giving rise to surprising new perspectives. An additional multi-sectioned work traced a supporting wall of the former church space, guiding visitors along the way to the paravent, as it were. Demands are made upon the beholder: he or she can only take in the entirety of Ruprecht's temporary installation by walking through the whole exhibition space and viewing the work along multiple lines of sight.

In 2002 we were confronted at the DOK Dokumentationszentrum für Moderne Kunst St. Pölten with works that seemed to enter into a relationship with their surroundings, opening dialogs and

accentuating the characteristics of the space in all of its facets. Rupprechter planned this extensive solo exhibition in cooperation with the noted Swiss architect Walter Zschocke, who as an internationally recognized architecture educator and critic has been living in Vienna since the mid-1980s. All of the works exhibited were created especially for the show. A long panel, clinging closely to the wall and extending through a doorway arch, visually connects two rooms like a ribbon, giving exhibition visitors spatial support and orientation. Another work stretches along the wall all the way out to the corridor. By means of this clever device, Rupprechter tangibly expands the total space available, ordering it anew and creating an uncomplicated transition between outside and inside. There arises an interplay between openness and closure, between architectural surroundings and line, between the surface and body of the artworks. Circumspectly, the artist has executed the panels in restrained colors so as to accentuate the spatial effect of the installation.

Central to all of Rupprechter's installations are the treatment of space and the perception of space in general. Often the artist invites photographers and artists from his circle of friends to document these projects. As in architecture, where space is created by the interplay of architectural elements and objects found at the site, Rupprechter also focuses his attention on breaks and irregularities in the execution of a wall, on windows and window niches, columns and pillars, on the fall of light or the qualities of walls, floors and ceilings.

He sets these and other aspects, which are essential in the establishment of proportion and the perception of the space in its entirety, into relationship with his art. This synthesis should be understood as an opportunity presented to the beholder, to approach the space, to delve into it and perceive it from a variety of viewpoints.

With carefully considered arrangements, Rupprechter opens his exhibition spaces, tracing their particularities and capturing their essence. The beholder is confronted with new fields of spatial experience through these artistic interventions: suddenly thresholds are no longer barriers, small rooms open out and appear large, floor reflections of artworks floating above are assimilated, turbulently heterogeneous wall structures are brought to stillness.

Rupprechter creates works that are dynamic and specific to the situation at hand. As if he were realizing a musical score, the artist brings together his architectural surroundings into a unified whole, making them unfold in his own special way.

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