

DREHORT - von Verena Thürkau

Text to the Exposition in *Jahresausstellung*, Kunsthalle Basel, 1998

by Roswitha Schild

When Verena Thürkau chose a name for her installation created for the Annual Exhibition of Basel Artists, she cleverly hit upon the title „Drehort“ (which literally means „turning place“ but is also the German word for a film location). On the one hand, the artist uses the term to refer to the rotating motion that the viewer describes almost automatically in this rather narrow room when trying to make sense of the text fragments affixed in four or five lines to the four walls. On the other hand, she is also alluding to the content of these texts which do indeed recall stage directions or a director’s instructions. The text fragments are perfectly adapted to the room both in form and in content. The letters made of plaster, which are stood up loosely on L-bars and lean against the walls, do not yield a context because of the excerptive presentation that appears justified by wall width and the various apertures. In a most playful way, Verena Thürkau is examining the natural human aspiration for understanding, for linking all the information we get to try and make sense of the world.



PHoto: Serge Hasenböhler, Basel

Basically, the subject of this work is that of sculpture. A sculpture is a freely standing form in space that has to be inspected by going around it in order to be completely grasped. Sometimes one succeeds in joining all the combining them to a meaningful whole, at other times the views remain fragments despite several roundings. It is this fragmentary view, coupled with the appreciation that it is impossible to obtain a static comprehension of a sculpture in its entirety from one viewpoint alone, which makes up one of the essentials of sculpture, as it were.

In a way, sculptures are similar to nursery rhymes that always come back to their beginning by some comic phrase or other. Other than paintings, stories or films, they cannot be grasped in a linear manner but only in the (imaginary) addition of disjointed aspects.

As Verena Thürkauf works with texts, she always prompts the viewers to interact with her work.

Text, in an art context, almost always has something explanatory to it, and often the viewer relies more on the text than on the original work, i.e. in our culture, there is still more willingness to get involved with the written word than to seriously concern oneself with visual art.

This installation gains added sophisticatedness because the artist, in a quite unaffected manner, provides an experience of the act of art viewing itself. For although the texts are precisely adjusted to the situation and therefore allow the viewer to be personally affected, by relating the „director’s instructions“ to his or her own situation at this time and in this room and with the chance participation of other persons (thus creating a space/time sculpture), they still leave enough latitude to enjoy them as elements of an imaginary (stage-)play which develops in the viewers’ heads without involving them personally.

A central aspect in Verena Thürkauf’s works of this type is certainly the association of motion and comprehension: the mind forces the body into action - here into a rotating movement - when the available data do not provide a complete picture, while the body drives the mind to extract some sense from the experience one has.