



Reto Boller
«Lost Form»
31.8. - 19.10.2013

The exhibition «Lost Form» uses the entire showroom of the Gallery Mark Müller to initiate a dialogue between the artistic genres of painting, sculpture, art installation and the spatial and architectonic environment. Three metal poles in the center of the room, together with a blue styrofoam object- straighten the entrance to the adjoining gallery room - layers of tar roof covering on the floor as well as the «object-paintings» on the walls constitute a flexible network, in which each piece can be considered either separately or within its context. This creates a dynamism beyond any genre of fine art or one possible reading. Reto Boller mostly never titles his artwork. He rather concisely describes the materials used so as not to influence the viewer in advance but to activate him or her in an exclusively visual and tactile manner.

The artist deploys everyday materials, as they appear on building sites, in factory halls or in his own actual world of things, e. g. the environment of his studio. Apart from their usual function these items and materials enter the sphere of painting, object, installation and the gallery space itself while simultaneously presenting themselves as a part of reality: One could presume that the metal poles and the styrofoam panels will be a future building project. Maybe a set of pillars or the construction of a new wall is planned here...?

As regards to the artwork of a plaster mold grounded with a red contact sheet, Reto Boller's appliquéés on vinyl go back to his practice of installing temporary paintings made of coloured adhesive foil, which began in 2001 - an approach to painting which rather than examining the traditional panel painting, explores the possibilities of expression after the expansion of media that occurred in the 1960s. When the colour of the plaster mold and the red background interrelate with each other the former function of the object disappears, it becomes a piece of art and can be reread differently. Though to what extent is the intention to provoke a new reading? Could it be the point here to ask the viewer for a personal interpretation coherent in his or her eyes? To a greater degree Boller is concerned with the transitional space beyond a fixed meaning - regarding both his own awareness throughout work in progress and the viewer's perception. The artist often employs prefabricated, ready-made objects, which are indeed man-made but lack the direct grip of manual processing through the mechanic mode of production, what could be seen as a quintessential issue for the engineered and prefabricated environment we live in. Nevertheless, in the aftermath Reto Boller creates a sensual experience and a closeness to the materiality using sterile industrial products.

With seemingly impersonal materials the artist establishes a dialogue in order to work on them and to change their state on the one hand as well as to leave them in their encountered quality on the other hand. Boller says he circles his compositions until he has found what he had not known before. When to intervene or to leave the objects as they are Boller decides, in the course of making. Finally objects with a strong simulative nature for confronting one's percipience emerge, insofar as all of a sudden «normal styrofoam» urges the viewer to question the habits with which one recognizes reality, instead of taking it for granted. Thus Boller intends not to get stuck within a permanent point of view but to open up for the unexpected - to break out of usual routines even amidst a strongly prefabricated environment. In so doing one could escape from the illusion of *one* reality.



Again returning to the break-up of the barrier between the genres, the work made of blue styrofoam could represent a painting by the application of red colour, an altarpiece by the panels at its sides, or a piece of installation art in the exhibition setting itself. But it does not at all matter which classification in terms of art-historical categories could be made here. Reto Boller's oeuvre does not match with any single genre or concept but stays autonomous in a nearly unsurpassable way. Though there are tendencies that locate Boller's work in Minimalism, Post-Minimalism, non-objectivity, deconstructive and conceptual art. But a definite classification is impossible.

Accordingly, the work made of bags and its title «Lost Form» become all the more significant. In the sacks which appear behind the blue wall there are the remains of firebricks once used for bronze casting from the foundry Felix Lehner in St. Gallen. The negative form out of firebrick has to be destroyed to remove the finished bronze casting. In German there is an expression for this negative form called «lost form» which can also be understood metaphorically in this context. Above all the work of firebrick-filled bags and the same-named exhibition are to stimulate something new, be it a further work by the artist or various readings of the artwork on behalf of the audience, especially when reading between the lines.

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