

Sculpture Unlimited – Über die Grenzen von Skulptur (On/Beyond the Limits of Sculpture)

Wednesday, 17 November 2010, 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.

**A Symposium of the Institute of Fine Arts and Cultural Studies,
Kunstuniversität Linz,**

Audimax und Südflügel, Kollegiumgasse 2, 4010 Linz

Curated by Eva Grubinger and Jörg Heiser

Moderator: Jakob Neulinger

Auguste Rodin originally conceived his famous monument *The Burghers of Calais* (1889) without a base. The citizens forced to witness the defeat and occupation of their city were to be at eye level with the viewers.

From the 1910s on, Constantin Brancusi began to push sculpture radically towards abstraction, in the process transforming the base into an integral element of the artwork. Around the same time, Marcel Duchamp started to develop his readymades – found, industrially manufactured objects that profoundly challenged the definition of what could be considered a sculpture or even a base.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the sculpture concept was further expanded to include land art and architecture (Rosalind Krauss' expression "sculpture in the expanded field" comes to mind) or social interaction (Joseph Beuys' notion of the "social sculpture"), as well as involving text, photography, film (Robert Smithson's slide shows, films and texts published in art magazines) and performance (e.g. Gilbert & George's living sculptures), without neglecting the grey zone between object and image (Donald Judd's specific objects or Nam June Paik's video sculptures) or works mingling of all of the above (e.g. Dan Graham). At the same time, artists like Louise Bourgeois, Eva Hesse or Yayoi Kusama eroded the machistic-masculine preconceptions of sculpture – the phallic order of the sculptor heroically hewing away at a vertical block of stone.

Against this historical backdrop, however, it seems almost as if sculpture has become an arbitrary discipline, since practically anything can be construed as a sculpture. By comparison, painting is much easier to define despite innumerable attempts to extend and radicalise the underlying concept. Yet interest in the history of sculpture seems to be reviving, including traditional techniques and production methods, which often appear radical and new in our age of Internet and simulation. Is it at all possible to expand towards the "inside", towards the history of sculpture? What would be a viable definition of sculpture, e.g. to account for the often vague differentiation between "installation" and "environment"? What skills do sculptors truly need? Last but not least: how can a contemporary sculpture department of a university dedicated to the arts define its field of work in a useful and stimulating manner?

10 a.m.: Rector Reinhard Kannonier: Welcome

10.15 a.m.: Eva Grubinger: Introduction

10.30 a.m.: Vivian Rehberg: Why Baudelaire Was Wrong about Sculpture

Charles Baudelaire titled a section of his review of the 1846 Paris Salon “Why Sculpture Is Boring”, followed by the opening line: *The origin of sculpture is lost in the mists of time; thus it is a Carib art*. Emphasizing the purportedly “savage” origins of sculpture, Baudelaire derided the lack of historical consciousness of the sculptors of his day, and hailed painting as the more authentic medium of modernity.

As expanded and pluralistic as contemporary sculptural practice appears, the works we identify as sculpture today display an acute awareness of their aesthetic and historical precedents, as well as of accompanying critical and theoretical discourses. This paper will explore how contemporary sculptural practice navigates its own historicity, specifically with respect to the object, and how it encroaches on other mediums, specifically that of the moving image, in order to argue, *contre* Baudelaire, that sculpture today is many things – except boring.

11.15 a.m.: Jennifer Allen: Asocial Sculpture: Sculpture in the Age of the Internet

The Internet throws the drawbacks of sculpture into sharp relief. Instead of circulating like texts, tweets or blogs, sculptures are tied to one site. The inertia of public sculptures, excluded even from travelling exhibitions, corresponds to an obsolete perception of what is public. How can a sculpture give expression to a community if people prefer to meet in virtual space? An overview of different attempts to resolve this issue, from “esthétique relationnelle” to new altar installations.

12 a.m.: Aleksandra Mir: Who Cares about Sculpture? I Just Want to Make Impossible Things!

What are the sculptural qualities of 1 million postcards that weigh 16 tonnes, arrive at the Venice Biennale in 3 trucks and then are scattered to the winds by the public? What are the time and space co-ordinates for a helium-inflated jet plane, left to hover above the ground in a “permanent state of landing”? What is the level of frustration associated with being stuck with a storage bill for 2,520 sporting trophies collected and called “art”? What is monumental about a 22-metre rocket built out of industrial debris that is discarded at a scrapheap after 3 days? What are the legal thresholds and administrative consequences of attaching 50 kg of sticky marzipan to a series of priceless plaster casts of antique statues in order to “fix” their broken noses, fingers and toes?

These are all works and situations by Aleksandra Mir, which she will discuss during

her presentation.

12.45 p.m.: Lunch break

2.30 p.m.: Jan Verwoert: The Devils Inside the Thing Speak with the Devils Outside (Sculpture, Self-made, Juju Magic)

Sculpture is action with things in space. What space? Social space, the triad of factory/manufactory/hobby room, but also the space of history and the biosphere. What action? Dealing with the devils in the detail, with the genius loci and the demons of the past, of things and animals.

3.15 p.m.: Nikolaus Hirsch: Infrastructural Models

In recent years, more and more artists have created institutional frame conditions (e.g. entire houses, Internet platforms) or infrastructure facilities (e.g. cafés, libraries, schools, video archives).

To what degree are these frame conditions and infrastructure facilities not merely functional tools but rather sculptures in their own right? In what way do these projects negotiate the boundaries between artistic, curatorial and architectural practice?

4 p.m.: Coffee break

4.30 p.m.: Jennifer Allen, Jörg Heiser (moderator), Anne von der Heiden, Nikolaus Hirsch, Martin Hochleitner: Is there anything like an “essence” of sculpture? Preliminary overview of an expanded concept of sculpture.

5.45 p.m.: Drinks and presentation of the new edition of fountain, the magazine of the programme Sculpture-Transmedial Space, with a performance by Andreas Haslauer

7 p.m.: Buffet and party

Jennifer Allen writes for several international art magazines, dailies and websites, e.g. frieze, Mousse, Taz, artforum.com. In 2009, Dr. Allen was awarded the Art Cologne Prize for Art Criticism. Born in Canada, she has been living in Berlin since 1995.

Eva Grubinger is an artist and since 2008 has been professor of sculpture-transmedial space at Kunstuniversität Linz. Individual shows e.g. at Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead UK (2003), Berlinische Galerie (2004), Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (2007) and Museum der Moderne in Salzburg (2009); group shows e.g. at Krannert Art Museum, Illinois (2009), Taipei Fine Art Museum (2008), Deichtorhallen Hamburg (2002). Eva Grubinger lives in Linz and Berlin.

Jörg Heiser, co-editor-in-chief of *frieze*/London and visiting professor of sculpture-transmedial space at Kunstuniversität Linz. His book “Plötzlich diese Übersicht. Was gute zeitgenössische Kunst ausmacht” was published by Claassen Verlag in 2007. He inter alia curated the exhibitions *Funky Lessons*, BAWAG Foundation, Vienna (2005) and *Romantic Conceptualism*. Jörg Heiser lives in Berlin.

Nikolaus Hirsch is an architect, art theorist and, since 2010, rector of Städelschule and director of Portikus in Frankfurt/Main. Before that, he was professor at Architectural Association School of Architecture, London, and visiting professor at Penn University, Philadelphia. His latest projects focus on the development of concepts for art institutions such as European Kunsthalle in Cologne (2006-2008), unitednationsplaza in Berlin (together with Anton Vidokle, 2006-2008), Cybermohalla Hub in Delhi, Cultural Agencies in Istanbul and a studio structure in The Land/Thailand. Hirsch is the author of “On Boundaries” and “Institution Building” (both published by Sternberg Press).

Martin Hochleitner studied classical archaeology and art history at Salzburg University. He has curated numerous exhibitions and since 2000 has been serving as director of State Gallery Linz. Since 2008, Martin Hochleitner has been professor of art history and art theory/curatorship focus at Kunstuniversität Linz. Before that, he taught at several universities, e.g. from 2007 to 2008 as visiting professor of photographic theory at University of Applied Arts Vienna. Martin Hochleitner lives in Linz.

Jakob Neulinger is an artist and, since 2008, assistant professor of sculpture-transmedial space at Kunstuniversität Linz. Before that, he studied visual arts, architecture and stage design at Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and Vienna University of Technology. In 2009, he founded the exhibition and event space Magazin in Vienna, as whose co-director he serves.

Aleksandra Mir is an artist. She studied at Gothenburg University, the School of Visual Arts and the New School for Social Research in New York. Individual shows e.g. at P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center New York (2004), Kunsthaus Zürich (2006) and Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (2009); group shows e.g. at Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2003), Whitney Biennial (2004), Venice Biennale (2009). Born in Poland, she holds both Swedish and U.S. citizenship and currently has no fixed address.

Vivian Rehberg is an art historian and critic from Paris. Since 2007, she has been serving as chair of critical studies and teaches modern and contemporary art history at Parsons School of Art and Design in Paris. From 2001 to 2004, she was curator for contemporary art at ARC/Musée d’art moderne de la Ville de Paris. Vivian Rehberg founded the *Journal of Visual Culture* and is a regular contributor to magazines such as *Art in America*, *Artforum* and *frieze*.

Jan Verwoert is an essayist. He teaches at Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam, and at De Appel Curatorial Programme, Amsterdam; “Bas Jan Ader – In Search of the Miraculous” was published in 2006 by Afterall Books/MIT Press. The essay collection “Tell me what you want what you really really want” will be published in 2010 by Sternberg Press. Jan Verwoert lives in Berlin.

Anne von der Heiden studied art, social sciences and psychology in Essen and Bochum. Since the 2010 winter semester, she has been professor of art history and

art theory at Kunstuniversität Linz. Before that, she taught and researched e.g. at ZKM and HfG in Karlsruhe, KHM in Cologne, Bauhaus University Weimar as well as Basel and Zurich Universities. She has authored and edited numerous publications, e.g. "Am Nullpunkt. Positionen der russischen Avantgarde", Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a. M. 2005 (together with Aage Hansen-Löve and Boris Groys).