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Harald Klingelhöller

Are there such things as literary sculptures? That would be a contradiction in terms. However, there are sculptures, namely those created by Harald Klingelhöller – currently still on show at the Skulpturenhalle in Neuss – in which material and title are very closely linked. Each of these sculptures has two sides: one of a legible verbal nature, the other tangible material, and these are on a par, each demanding to be perceived and taken into consideration. And so, the sculptures exist both in accessible space and in the realm of the imagination simultaneously. Just as the space in which we can move around is defined by the sculpture, so the imaginary verbal realm is differentiated by the title.



“Snowfall talking” is the title of Klingelhöller’s exhibition at the Skulpturenhalle and this already provides food for thought. Is it the snowfall talking and becoming an actor, or is there talk about snowfall, which is therefore a passive object? Likewise, but not in parallel with this distinction, a title gives rise to several sculptural materialisations that are not compatible with each other – different versions of the title. “Im Traum der Träumer erwachen die Geträumten” (“In the Dreamer’s Dream the Dreamed Wake Up”): One is a linked aluminium chain. It represents the title in that the number of colourless links corresponds to the number of letters in the words. The components of the chain are noticeably flat in shape, thus becoming a sign, the image of a chain. Rather than serving to cordon off, it circumscribes and defines a space. The second version of the title consists of seven copper components with a blunted triangular profile: now it is the measurements of the lengths that correspond to those of the title words. These elements are laid out in a star arrangement on the floor as another kind of representation. Both sculptural versions are derived from the same words despite their dissimilarity. Yet merely looking at these versions does not reveal the title. All that remains is a tangible rhythm, interconnecting the words and the sculpture.



Klingelhöller’s sculptures never simply exist on their own, but rather, stand for something else, which without them would not exist. The representation is never based on a model, but actively creates one; nor does it merely operate within the scope of the title, for it can also be the shadow that a piece of sculpture casts. The shape of the shadow is taken to be a depiction of the sculpture, transferred to metal sheet, duplicated and then put in a box. A sculpture can project many shadows, each with an enigmatic illegible silhouette bearing no resemblance to the original source. This counterplay between what is related and yet dissimilar is also evident in the hanging sculptures that allow shadow shapes realized in sheet metal to float in the balance. Black and white, light and dark keep each other afloat; the contradictions are complementary and absorb the surrounding space into their uneasy existence.



There is no such thing as a literary sculpture, agreed. And yet, does the shadow of a sculpture introduce temporality, given that there is a sculpture followed by its shadow? Is a shadow a memory or an idea? Does it point to the past, or pre-empt something? Perhaps these are the wrong questions to pose, for in the sculptures conceived by Klingelhöller there is no before and after and the correlation he achieves with his different versions is not bound by time. Each version is a possibility, not an ultimate solution; it is a model, but not in the sense of a maquette to be magnified, but as a model in the scale of 1: 1 that can be put to the test in the exhibition.



The exhibition at the Skulpturenhalle in Neuss is on show until December 11, 2022. I have probed the above questions in more depth in the catalogue.

Dieter Schwarz