

„Book Stories“

Art Objects by François du Plessis

There is some tradition in dealing with a book as an object of art. To design it or make use of it, for instance, to unriddle it through illustrations or, by means of other materials (white paint), encipher it and thus make it a still greater secret, is even in this age of virtual reality a rather novel, contemporary possibility for an artist. After all, the book is an object of cultural value of the highest rank; whoever uses it, deals with it, must be a match for it.

François du Plessis' "Book Stories" can definitely be judged as successful realisation. Not so much because he consequently puts high value on the aesthetic perception, on shape and colour, on material and surface of his works, and on the multifaceted, rich, sometimes controllable, often intuitive interaction. Also not because he thus keeps far enough away from the attempt to interpret, to comment the book's content; criticism of the media or even literary criticism is not his thing. But simply because he acknowledges the book as an individual body from which he occasionally creates, with some white paint and some wood and metal, a totally self-contained, self-assured new work of art.

Basic prerequisite for the substantiveness of these objects is that the book's content is irrelevant. Not the word, not the story, are the artist's material, but the paper, the bound body of a hundred, two hundred, three hundred individual pages. To them he *responds*, reacts to the innumerable layers of pages, to the colour of the binding, the size, the traces of usage, the bulk. He forces the body to turn and twist, saws it to pieces (not what is written in the book) and reassembles the halves thus gained. Only in this way, in total independence of the original material's intellectual pretence – or rather *of the allocated, presumed pretence* – can emerge what is evocative of architectural figures. Compact, solidified sculptures, similar to each other only at first glance. Small, angular, deep reaching shelters where playfully longing agile thoughts take refuge. Structures of innumerable spaces and dark tunnels, random warps and semi-pervious layers.

The early whitewashed objects were distinctly 3-dimensional. Their character was to be attributed to the mass density and the noticeably harnessed astounding power therein. The new magazine objects are of entirely different appearance, well-nigh laid-back, *disencumbered*. Because the original colourfulness has not been obliterated with white paint, everything resembles more a (3-dimensional) painting than a sculpture. Like the segments of colour chromatics are the fields lined up on the spread out pages.

Unexpectedly, arte povera becomes concrete art. Indeed, even now the artist does not allow the contents of the books he used to distract or influence him. However, the preserved colour allows the assumption that a selection prevailed. But appearance is deceptive. We still do not encounter the content of the book which supplies the basic module, the material, instead we discover a entirely new work of art.

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Stefan Skowron

