

Text for press release

Thomas Kiesewetter
 „Broken Butterflies“

24 May – 29 July 2011

Opening times:
 Tuesday to Friday 14h00 – 18h00
 and by prior arrangement

Grieder Contemporary is delighted to announce the first-ever solo exhibition by the Berlin-based artist Thomas Kiesewetter at a Swiss gallery. Featured in the garden and interior of the villa are a selection of large-format stainless steel works together with smaller items fashioned from bronze and sheet metal. Complementing the exhibition is another sculpture located in Zurich's Tessinerplatz: part of the Gasträume 2011 initiative (which promotes art in Zurich's public spaces), it will be there from the end of May to the end of August.

The Broken Butterflies sculpture in Zurich's Tessinerplatz represents Kiesewetter's first-ever intervention in a public space. The orange-coloured work consists of a range of geometric bodies that appear to have been put together at random: triangular prisms of various sizes take shape alongside disk-like elements with curved contours supported by narrow, trunk-like bars and a delicate construction resembling a ladder. The individual elements are held together using coarse screws and the welds remain visible as surplus edging. The paint enrobes the ensemble like an all-embracing cloak. The larger-than-life sculpture stands on a chest-high plinth in the middle of the expanse of Tessinerplatz. Like the sculpture itself, the plinth bears witness to non-perfection: not painted and sealed to perfection, its weathered surface is dotted with rough flakes of rust.

More so than in an interior space, what emerges here is the aspect of what the artist calls "360 mal vorn" – the '360 frontal views' offered by his sculptures. By this he means that there is no front or back – by walking around the work one has "360 frontal views of distended or compacted shapes". Kiesewetter is concerned with "the specific momentum of the sculpture, its impulsive force – that flow that lets the nominal immobility of the shape emerge as the outer limit of movement, as virtual movement, be it continuous or eruptive, abrupt, organic, vehement or aggressive". On Tessinerplatz, these 360 frontal views are joined by a further level: the possibility of viewing the work from afar and close-up. How does the sculpture change over distance? What details disappear, what shapes acquire three-dimensionality?

Aside from Broken Butterflies on Tessinerplatz, Grieder Contemporary is showing stainless steel sculptures by Thomas Kiesewetter in the grounds of its villa in Küsnacht and – following initial trials in 2006 – works fashioned from that most classic of materials, patinated bronze. This latter metal called for a new approach.

Kiesewetter usually starts on a new sculpture by making a full-scale model out of cardboard or wood. These models incorporate individual elements such as pyramids, cones or curved shapes that defy closer definition. These elements are self-contained and are only combined with each other in the next phase of the process. It is at this point that Kiesewetter evaluates the various configurations resulting from the random juxtaposition of the individual elements. The interplay between them reveals their harmonies and contrasts. In the end, the individual elements combine to form a sculpture, which is then reproduced using sheet metal that is loosely screwed and welded together. The traces of the manual processing of the metal are left for all to see. The use of bronze requires a different approach. Closed, voluminous sections of the sculpture are now cast, while the more fragile elements are fashioned – cut and bent – from sheets of bronze.

Because the cast sections are missing the fine details – slits, holes, screws, furrows left by scratching – the assemblage takes on a more minimalistic character and more closely resembles classic sculpture. Yet even if reminiscences of the machine art of constructivism as well as of abstract post-war sculpture in the United States are undeniable, they should never be thought of as direct quotations. Kiesewetter is concerned with creating something new, with the contemporaneity of sculpture, which invents itself anew, but in doing so keeps in mind the achievements of the past.

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