

On Ane Vester

“All isms must go, as they came. As fashions must end, since they began, just as man does. But life, that made them, continues. And art, its parallel and symbol – both are without end”. (Josef Albers)

A detached purity permeates the recent sculptures by Ane Vester. The bright colours in her multipartite, abstract wall sculptures are not based on a well-defined and dogmatically conceived system. The light-absorbing colours have been applied on rigid and standardized, even wooden supports which were consequently hung against the wall in vertical and horizontal positions.

The rigid screen in the paintings of Piet Mondriaan was the compositional derivative of the landscape in his immediate environment. The flat polders and the vertical trees, the houses and the people acted as the geometrical coordinates for a deeply experienced, yet dogmatic use of colour and geometry. The rich tradition of plastically combining colour and form in an a-referential art remains an inexhaustible source for relevant, contemporary plastic ‘combinations’ which usually acquire a surplus value by the secure positioning of a work of art in the specific spatial context. In this sense the sculptures of Elsworth Kelly, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, John McCracken and, more recently, of Adrian Schiess come to mind. The sites where these sculptures are installed are of prime importance for their perception and interpretation. Sculptures are by definition ‘site sensitive’ and touch the visitor within the field of tension between the space, the work of art and the spectator. Ane Vester’s new sculptures incorporate all the formal canons of modernism. They do not directly refer to a demonstrable, experienced reality; they deny each form of narration and are not the result of application of a clear-cut, schematic transposition of colour and matter. Even the traces of an artistic deed are lacking here and there is no sign at all of stylistic arrangement. The dimensions of her wall pieces - mostly derived from her own body – are the most evident measurements for art with a human dimension and ‘presence’. The beam-shaped, horizontally attached wall sculptures are massive, compact and concisely constructed. They mark the space with inter-linked pieces of monochrome, wooden slats which can never be taken in with a glance. Every other point of view gives lead to a different version and colour sensation, turning the (abstract) work of art into an attentively observable and permanently varying ‘colour story’. Her colours may be considered as objects from the ‘lost and found’: somehow, the selected colours become a diary of the elements attracting Vester’s attention in e.g. furniture, design or, simply, in the chaotic colour palette of the city...

Unlike the rigid colour studies in the steel patch-work sculptures of Donald Judd, Ane Vester breaks loose from the dead weight of ideology in her art praxis. It is a sensible way out, if one wants to assimilate, interpret and formally re-translate the recent, extremely theoretically grounded legacy of (minimal and conceptual) radical art of the last decades in an acceptable manner.

In each of her recent, vertically oriented wall sculptures, three estheticizing coloured slats are kept together by means of rubber elastics. Here, we may speak of a visible and ‘tense’ assemblage of three separate parts, implying that the artist suggests to the spectator that he/she is free to mentally re-arrange the sequence in the composition of the works. Vester’s work leaves an aesthetical and simple impression and it is precisely through this that she synthesizes the rich traditions of modernist sculpture and painting with the aesthetical pleasure of looking at art.

“I don’t want to make works that hit you over the head or smash you in the eye, I like works that you can be in room with and ignore when you want to ignore them. I get pleasure from doing the work. In my art I have as concentrated an experience as possible. Focused, it meets needs of my own and I don’t think I am so peculiar a person as to have needs not shared by other people”. (Carl André, 1968)

Luk Lambrechts, 1994