

Artinamericamagazine.com

*Enter the Fold : Katja Strunz*, par Stephen Riolo – 17 août 2010

## Enter the Fold: Katja Strunz

by *stephen riolo* 08/17/10

Berlin-based artist Katja Strunz tantalizes viewers with her adaptations of modernist forms—dangling abstract geometries in configurations on the wall, or subtly altering found examples of Twentieth Century design.

Strunz's paper plane-like metal metal works zoom across walls, but the artist's interests ultimately exceed the gallery, and the history of the square she's crumpling. One recent show has seen the artist's first sustained effort at outdoor work, and without any literal architecture to deconstruct. On the eve of Strunz's forthcoming solo show, opening September 3 in Cologne, she discusses the secret histories folded into her materials.

STEPHEN RIOLO: "Im Geviert" the title of your current solo show at the Saarlandmuseum Saarbrücken, calls up thoughts of Heidegger, an ordering of form and nature.

KATJA STRUNZ: The concept for the show came from the fact that I was asked to do outdoor sculptures. I normally work with interior room structures. My last show in Berlin, at Contemporary Fine Arts, was called *Einbruchstellen* ("Points of Rupture"). Although these works were abstract in form they had a concrete relationship to interior spaces, like cracks in a wall or pieces of broken plaster falling from the ceiling. The whole show had to do with objects breaking in from the outside and a lot to do with decay.

For this recent outdoor exhibition there was no obvious structure to be broken. So I focused on Heidegger's concept of the *Geviert* ("four fold"). He constructed a solid exterior space by dividing the world into inseparable quadrants. The sculptures in this show were conceived as broken and fallen fragments of this construction.

RIOLO: Broken by a move away from Heideggerian thought or some other force?

STRUNZ: No, just by time. Today we have a different idea of time and space. These sculptures belong to a series of works that I call "visionary fragments." If an object crashed to earth you would get these crumpled forms, the compression and the subsequent folding of the objects surface would define a specific space and moment in time.

RIOLO: So each work communicates both a physical location and a moment in time?

STRUNZ: Yes, this is something I'm very interested in and try to capture in my work.

RIOLO: I find that, because your work is largely wall-based, it presents a very fascinating contrast between traditional forms of painting versus sculpture. We are used to framing paintings on a wall and placing sculpture in a space; the wall tends to be reserved for "painting." I find it interesting that you went from producing painting to sculpture and kept it on the wall.

STRUNZ: When I started out I was producing large-scale paintings of bird like forms. A chance viewing of Robert Smithson's crystalline mirror works came as a revelation. Since then the media of sculpture has been the way I prefer to express my ideas. I started to work on "real space" with a strong sense of the aftermath of time.

RIOLO: Although your work is generally understood as formalist, I find it much more sensitive than traditional



Minimalism. Some of your work retains the unique patina of their based materials while other are finished with high polish colors. How do you relate the history of these materials?

STRUNZ: In different ways: I buy new metals and put them outside for years, or I find materials and I try to keep them how they are, especially when I work with metal because metal's inherent plasticity stores its history. I work very much "in process," trying to underline the materials' emergent forms. I collect a lot of objects and recycle them into new art, putting old fragments together to create something new and

unique that might live as art, as a kind of construction. Each piece stores its own history. When I create works out of wood, they are fashioned after folded cardboard objects, as I see these folds as the marks of history. So, I don't necessarily have to use old materials.



RIOLO: The natural decay and historically rough treatment of such materials seems to be part of the history of local architectures. Have you been inspired by Berlin's ruins?

STRUNZ: Yes, for sure. Here you can watch how things change form as they get torn down and new things are built up. It's always a question of how to store this organic history. I am interested in how to make history live, which is logically impossible. As a child, I remember visiting a museum of classical art and being upset to find that I could not feel the passage of time and its effects on the art. There is an impulse to preserve the art object, but when art stops transforming itself it all feels a bit like visiting a cemetery. I started looking for a kind of envisioning or visualization of time. One's perception of time is not controllable, but it seems that within traumatic experiences or memories the past suddenly merges into the present.

RIOLO: Negotiating the concept of time is also something you take on directly in the titles of your works and exhibitions. Tell us about "The Sounds of the Pregeometric Age" at the Camden Arts Center, London.

STRUNZ: Pregeometric is a term from physics. It is the time before the big bang. I went on to develop the idea for a sound installation, as it might be possible that somewhere in the universe there are still sound waves traveling out from such a distant time. It was just such an absurd concept to visualize, that I put an antenna outside and assembled objects that looked like receivers for sounds from another time.

RIOLO: Do you feel that your works create their own sense of timelessness or suspension of time?

STRUNZ: I try to capture a moment. They are like moments taken from the endless progression of a movement.