

Katja Strunz



Katja Strunz
'Einbruchstellen'
(Points of Rupture)
2008
Installation view

Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin, Germany

The potential effects that a change of gallery context can have on an artist's work are always a subject of speculation, and 'Einbruchstellen' (Points of Rupture), Katja Strunz's first solo show in the newly adopted quarters of Contemporary Fine Arts in her home town of Berlin, is a case in point. It is hard to imagine how Strunz's finely tuned appreciation of the subtleties of scale and material will fare in this expansive, slick gallery designed by star architect David Chipperfield. What will happen to a body of work that concerns itself with the delicate resonances of history and time fading - with what the artist terms 'after-math' - in this flawless palace of concrete, glass, bright lights and smooth new walls?

Visible through the windows of the ground-floor gallery space, a gathering of box-sized black metal cubes cluster and spread across the wall. A familiar motif in Strunz's work over the last few years, the cubes in *Memory Wall* (all works 2008) cleave at first to a regularly spaced grid pattern - some as square panels that lie flat against the wall, others in various stages of emergence - before they veer away and float off towards the ceiling. These are denser, larger and less tentative than the rusty, bird-like flocks that peppered walls in previous installations, but serve as a bold

introduction to an exhibition that revisits several recurrent themes and forms in Strunz's work.

Inside, hang sheets of powder-coated steel folded into complex zigzag forms that approximate paper airplanes, fans or beginners' origami. *Umkehrung* (Reversal) sits well here. A lightly folded plane of white with one panel in a striking glossy raspberry red, it is a brash and sexy updating of earlier, more muted, wood-and-rusty-steel folded forms. The folded sculpture is a signature form for Strunz: it articulates through its simple pleats the complex relations of objects to space and time, while having the added benefit of being infinitely variable. Being wall-based, it also deftly avoids the classical sculptural problem of the pedestal - a move at once modest and provocative. These simply constructed objects prefer to hover aloofly on the walls than to assert their three dimensions on the floor.

Strunz attempts to tackle the pedestal problem head on, however, in the larger floor-based assemblage *Einbruchstellen*, in which a black platform is the low pedestal - or, possibly, stage - for a large white folded sculpture, while various geometric components are arranged on the floor nearby. Is this landing of the winged object on the floor a 'point of rupture' in Strunz's practice? Though certainly an elegant development, the work seems more concerned with finish than conceptual resolve.

In 2004, Caoimhin Mac Giolla Leith wrote that Strunz 'rejects the machine-tooled precision and imposing scale of high Minimalism in favour of a

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more intimate, studio-based and arguably more traditionally European sense of handicraft'. The precisely constructed works on view here effect a move away from this intimacy towards exactly such 'machine-tooled precision and imposing scale', visible again on the second floor in a large walk-in folded sculpture (*Der müde Traum*, The Tired Dream) made from sections of white-lacquered wood, not quite large enough to be labyrinthine, but too big to achieve the compelling weightlessness of the smaller folded works. Decked around the walls are pretty assemblages of clock hands, metal shards and shiny discs in Constructivist diagonals, with titles such as *Moments of Decomposition* or *Broken Bracelets*. The delicacy and evocativeness Strunz is capable of in her sculptural combinations of resuscitated found materials is absent. These new works appear merely polite.

In the final room, a cascade of oxidization descends a rickety staircase of gleaming copper (*Untitled*), held up by a spindly frame of iron and wood. Like an ancient artefact, it seems to tease the real history manifest in the dramatic view of the neo-classical buildings of Berlin's Museum Island and the communist-era television tower, seen through the picture window beyond. Meanwhile, a collage on the wall behind spells out the word *Stagnation*. It is in this state of stagnated, suspended time that Strunz's works thrive – a state all but impossible to achieve in the atmosphere of a blue-chip architected gallery. Strunz responds to these conditions by expanding in scale and upping the finish, but at the risk of threatening the subtle resonance and considerable wit of her work.

Kirsty Bell

Jacob Feige
Dusk Accelerator
2008

Oil and resin on canvas
183×213 cm



Katja Strunz
Broken Bracelets
2008
Wood, metal, lacquer
274×142×48 cm