

Whitewall: 'THOMAS KIESEWETTER: MIDNIGHT SKY', By Anna Samson, May 30th, 2012

At Thomas Kiesewetter's solo show "Midnight Sky" at Galerie Almine Rech in Brussels, the 48-year-old German artist's wall sculptures are imbued with an enlivened energy. It is as if their contrasting shapes and colors are enabling them to leap off the walls and into the space. Anna Sansom spoke to Thomas Kiesewetter about his exhibition.

WHITEWALL: You originally studied painting. Why did you switch to making sculpture?

THOMAS KIESEWETTER: I did my first sculpture in 1999 when I was still studying. I switched to sculpture because I was never sure as a student which direction was the right one, and I was always switching back and forth between sculpture and painting. In the paintings, three-dimensional or two-dimensional looking shapes were appearing more and more, and that brought me towards trying it for real.

WW: This is the first time that you're presenting wall sculptures, which signals a new departure from the monochromatic floor sculptures that you're known for. What prompted you to make them?

TK: The floor sculptures are based on the idea of something standing in front of you. It's also very confining in a way. So I wanted to pursue the drawings I made and I was wondering if it was possible to develop that a bit further, using paper and canvas. But it didn't work out and it was not really honest because painting in the sense is not my medium. I figured out with the wall sculptures how to make the form a little bit flatter. They're actually quite flat but because of the illusion of perspective they appear more voluminous. You can be more expressive and free with the momentum of the sculpture because you're not bound to the fact that something has to stand in front of you. You can relate more to the momentum or the form. Maybe it relates to de Kooning as well. I would like to do something as clear and as spontaneous as possible.

WW: How does the shape of a sculpture come into being?

TK: I do little sketches and drawings and think more of individual, simple shapes that have a certain momentum, direction or appearance. Some are wavy or warped; others are pointed and sharp-edged. At first, I develop those individual shapes in cardboard. Then I try to provoke certain kinds of accidents. I literally throw things around to try to find a situation or a consideration for those shapes. For example, one falls to the floor and creates another form, and that could be the beginning of a sculpture. And I try to capture that moment, of those different forms coming together, and to put it up against the wall. You should still be able to feel the individual shapes but they should come together in a way that there is one momentum. The contrast of those shapes – pointed and round; organic and constructed – and those different characteristics bring out the appearance of the entire sculpture. When I have a feeling that it's good and interesting enough, I convert that into metal. And if I still like it [once it's cast in metal], then I start with the painting afterwards.

WW: What was the thinking behind your decision to paint the wall sculptures, in contrast to how the floor sculptures are monochromatic?

TK: With the floor sculptures, I was always focused on this aspect of entity: that it's standing in front of you, in the same space, and resembles you as a viewer. And therefore, they're monochromatic because I don't want to upset the feeling of them being an entity in front of you. When you walk around the floor sculptures, you see the different aspects from behind and in front. The hanging sculptures don't have that physicality and there is no gravity involved. So you don't have that lightness and heaviness any more but with the different colors you can bring back the different aspects and the sense of weight. The color contrasts of the wall sculptures replace what happens when you move around the floor sculptures.

WW: What are you seeking to achieve through the sculptures?

TK: I'm interested in how the forms, and the feel of the shapes, appear to you as the viewer. If you see something wavy, how does it feel when you look at it? How do you feel the wavy-ness and the slowness of the arched shape in contrast to a pointed shape?

WW: What inspired you to title the show "Midnight Sky»?

TK: The sculptures are hanging on the wall as you look at them but you, the viewer, are not in the same space. In a funny way, you can say that they are like planets that you see in the sky. You see them but you're not together with them in the space any more.

TAGS:

Almine Rech Gallery, Brussels, Midnight Sky, Thomas Kiesewette