

The Guardian Online: 'Artist of the week 70: Katja Strunz', by Skye Sherwin, January 13th 2010

From eerily empty clock faces to angular knots of twisted steel, Strunz creates sculptures that seem trapped in time



Oddball orchestra ... installation view of Strunz's *Sound of the Pregeometric Age* (2009). Photograph: Andy Keate/Courtesy of Camden Arts Centre Andy Keate/Camden Arts Centre

Sculptor Katja Strunz resurrects the forward-thinking forms of modernism or minimalism, yet what she unearths bears signs of the grave. In her recent *Memory Wall* (2008), black cubes recalling Kasimir Malevich's famous square or Donald Judd's minimalist boxes congregate haphazardly on walls like migrating birds. While some of her works are rendered in powder-coated steel or bronze, others are rusty and dented. They seem to be confronting their own inevitable demise. Other works use old bits of scrap metal, bent and twisted into batty-looking gizmos – notably clock faces surrounded by halos of curling wire.

Strunz's eureka moment as an artist came when she was studying painting at Germany's Karlsruhe State Academy in the mid-90s, and saw Robert Smithson's crystalline sculpture *Untitled 1964–65*. Setting aside painting, she began to develop her first angular sculptures, fashioning works in tarnished metal, which rather than reflect their own surfaces ad infinitum like Smithson's, seemed to tacitly acknowledge their limited existence. *Brunnen* (Fountain), shown in her first solo exhibition at Berlin's Galerie Giti Nourbakhsh in 2000, was another turning point: water endlessly trickled down a metal staircase salvaged from an abandoned swimming pool in East Berlin.

Ridged or folded sheets of steel have since become signature pieces. Her pleated diamond shapes recall sky-bound paper aeroplanes or origami birds. Or are they wrinkles, as if the metal had buckled under time's duress? More than simply pointing to the past, these rusty, retro-Modernist sculptures condense time, bringing the dreams and failures of other eras into the present.

Why we like her: For her current show at Camden Arts Centre, Strunz has installed a range of spindly, makeshift contraptions – old brass horns, ashtrays, cymbals, bells and candlesticks atop metal poles, like music stands.

Through speakers, this oddball orchestra transmits noise captured by an antenna outside the gallery as a restless soundtrack of bleeps, crackles and fuzzes.

Nightmare scenarios: As a child, Strunz was haunted by abstract dreams in which monochrome balls rolled towards her, getting bigger and bigger – images she's tried to realise in her work.

Where can I see her? Strunz's Sound of the Pregeometric Age is at Camden Arts Centre, London until 7 March 2010.