

H. Kiecol Wolfsburger Kunstverein '95

The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at anytime what I think right.
(Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience*).

It would seem the cool thing to do is to describe the journey. Wolfsburg is a space which lies east of Hannover and north of Braunschweig just on the west side of the former G.D.R., and under Celle. There is at the moment a ticket which one can buy for 15 DM and travel anywhere in Germany during the weekend, but only by the local services (nur in Zügen des Nahverkehrs). This is a fantastic experience in travel. It took me seven and a half hours each way with a maximum stay of two in Wolfsburg. It was well worth it. Bothways I had to change in Bielefeld and Hannover, with an assorted crew of weekenders who were attracted by the hypercheap travel. One group of youngsters had done a ten hour round trip from Köln to Hannover as a kind of daytrip on the Deutsche Bundesbahn with a stop over in Hannover as a novelty gimmick to the ride. On the way back there were so many people leaving the C.E.B.I.T. computer fair in Hannover toward Bielefeld they had to order extra two trains to the one regularly scheduled at 18.05.

Wolfsburg is a town like Leverkusen and Ludwigshafen where the whole town's manufacture is dominated by Volkswagen, Bayer and BASF respectively. One could from a birds eye view imagine, through a shift of scale, this city as a surreal floor plan that turns these colossal spaces into a mere ten thousand square meters of a factory. Such is the overwhelming nature of the monopoly of the industry in this city that I'm sure there is a disease that consumes the people called Volkswagenkrankheit, a banal work horse that

douses the spirit. In this setting I wondered how Kiecol had been received by the local bourgeois society. Especially when his formal approach manages to turn tricks with one's perception of scale and space, and time's linearity begins to waver.

In keeping with the adventure I arrived in Wolfsburg maintaining a decadent and blasé attitude to my task: finding the Kunstverein. I was forced into a double take when I reached the sight of the exhibition. It was a "Schloß". This was proving to be a series of perversions that expose the limits of ones capacity to anticipate. Obviously I'm not used to the variety of this institutions' sites. I found the Kiecol exhibition located on one wing of this house sandwiched between the Städtische Galerie and the Städtisches Museum, the latter once having been the Heimat Museum. There was a disgusting smell of spaghetti bolognese that managed to invade the whole section of the combined institutions. What ever happened to tea and cakes. Kiecol was more anticipatable than this venue which could have functioned as a ladies club for bored housewives minus the smell. In fact his restraint was a welcome breath of fresh air among the hollow traces of chatter and cultural asides.

The installations most striking quality was the turning of the moulded concrete letters (approximately of dimensions 20cm³) that spelled "Wolken" into lightness. There seemed to be about ten or so of each letter randomly ordered, but consistently placed to determine a border around this 400qm rectangular room, creating an approximate oval space within which they resided. The prints on the wall were of two main themes. One which had been hinted at by the letters, evoked ethereal space. The other provided a subtle retrospective.

Four huge prints (183 x 123, 1991) with the title "Astronomie" were literal depictions

168 of the heavens, black and white in colour, the *stars* oval in shape. One large and a cluster of four small prints with diamond shapes of various sizes were on another wall and evoked its infinity by their colour and title "Astronomieblau" (1994). A third selection were a pair of small prints called "Zweimal Himmel" (Zwei Radierungen, 1993) which featured two variations of thick black lines that reminded me of aprons, but were more likely to have been rays of sun light. These observed a Kiecolean version of op art. The last group, separated from the two etchings by a door, were seven classic prints from 1980 until '92 that very much remain within the formal semiotic that Kiecol has built up over the past fifteen years. They seemed to function as a retrospective arc to remind the audience of his consistence: An unwavering concern with space, and scale.

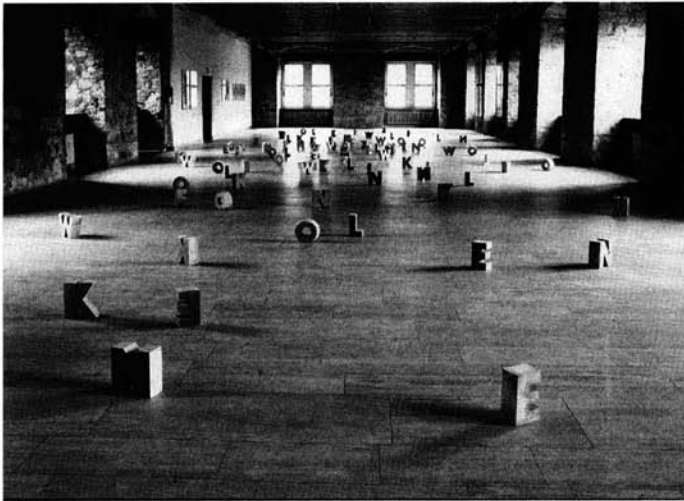
What one finds imbedded in his work seems to carry an idea of scale clearly determined in relation to the human form. Even though it might not be his intention to expose the way a standard scale captures space, he seems by his constant association and references to scale in fact captured by it. But his self conscious awareness of space also carries an unresolved anti-aesthetic and disabled schizo beauty. There is a veil of ambiguous naivety which manifests itself as an assertive and precise *sweetness* as many who know him have invoked. This veil becomes a red blanket that frustrates forces that wish to organise and rigidify codes.

What we are left with is a weird loss of scale and perspective; a space we float through and cannot help but misunderstand and question. As forms flatten out and shapes gather volume we are invited into a region that appears to be something more than two and less than three dimensions. These multiples speak from within a heterogeneous symbiosis of signs that infinitely involute standards

of quantity or quality. (Within this milieu, we can see two properties of symbiosis which are of a supplementary nature. Symbiosis on the one side adds to the signified, and on the other side testifies to a lack on the part of the signified.)

In this respect he is immersed in a movement which on the one hand multiplies his relations with the circumstances he encounters, and on the other hand undermines philosophical analogies or oppositions that might be legislated. For example a nature/culture opposition. Nature is classically considered spontaneous and dependant on any particular culture or determinant norm. Culture inversely would be that which depends upon a system of norms regulating society and therefore capable of varying from one social structure to another. But when we encounter something which would seem to require the predicates of nature and of culture we encounter a movement which escapes these concepts and certainly precedes them. For example human beings produce buildings in relation to a human size no matter how monumental its aesthetic or what its function is. This would seem to be also a natural occurrence since all cultures have this pragmatism. This principle although seemingly self evident instigates a collapse of opposition and creates a scandal because it re-integrates culture into nature. Here the limits of the nature/culture opposition make itself felt.

For example the "Tor aus Gußbeton und Klinker" that Kiecol made in Hamburg in 1985, the "Fünfundzwanzig Treppen" and the "Vierzehn Treppen" (im Westfälischen Kunstverein 1990 - 1991), or the "Wolken" in this exhibition, seem not to be turned toward the origin of an order of signs but affirms their replacability. This is achieved by exposing, through a series of paradoxical displacements, the limits of an aesthetic sub-



4 Hubert Kiecol, „*Wolken*“, Beton, 1995.

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servient to fixed standards of quantity or quality. The “Tor” lacks a function as the roof is too high to serve as a shelter for the human animal and it is not a symbolic passage to, or through, something. Similarly the stairs are too small to use so they don’t lead anywhere and unlike K. Fritsch and her placement of the installation of the “Rattenkönig” in the Dia center for the arts, New York in 1993, there is no defining conceptual subject. And the concrete letters of “Wolken” lose their sense as wind carries them off. They inhabit a space as a multiplicity of mutants.

Though one could say that he avoids an explicit politics of identity, still it would seem that this rogue mythopoetic movement shares a common ground with the economic and administrative systems that were once constructed to affirm a center. And even though Kiecol explicitly undermines his relations to a restrictive analogy that legislates, there will always be an implicit nostalgic desire to inspire a new humanism. To hold this at bay, critique must be part of the work to undermine its own authority since the work can be compared only with its own movement.

Precisely because of this refusal to assert an absolute, that Kiefer or Merz or Lüpertz seem to desire, I would associate his art more with that of Isa Genzken. It would seem also that though he has refused a foundational truth, his mode of representation which leans toward a minimum of formal variation, is a

severe reserve having the density of toffee and will, like these new non lethal crowd control weapons, limit his range and effect on the enemy. In this respect his role at the Düsseldorf academy will at first function quite smoothly as the limits of his formalism are misunderstood. But I think it will become more gooey as the implications of his refusals are grasped. One should take up an anomalous position in relation to Kiecol and his work, this will stabilise them temporarily and draw them into a promiscuous space. They will continue to transform and supplement the dimensions already available. Chuckles. If, after all.

KIRON KHOSLA

Verhaltensmuster Simone Westerwinter im Bonner Kunstverein

Unter dem Titel „Duchamps Urenkel“ organisiert Annelie Pohlen vom Bonner Kunstverein eine Ausstellungsreihe, die von Simone Westerwinter eröffnet wird. Außer Westerwinter stehen lediglich zwei Künstler des Ausstellungsprojekts fest. Ansonsten soll es bewußt offen sein, um flexibel auf aktuelle Positionen reagieren zu können. Nach den Arbeiten von Westerwinter werden die von Andreas Exner und Wiebke Siem innerhalb der Ausstellungsreihe gezeigt. Pohlen erklärte in der Pressekonferenz, daß sich in den Werken dieser KünstlerInnen für sie ein mo-