

# AUREL SCHEIBLER

## Im Prinzip der Ersten Abteilung

Erich Reusch

21 September – 9 November, 2013

Opening: Friday, September 20 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.



Untitled (diptych), 2013, acrylic on canvas, each part 80 x 120 cm (31 ½ x 47 ¼ in.)

**Berlin** – “Im Prinzip der Ersten Abteilung” is the first solo exhibition of works by Erich Reusch (b. 1925) to take place at Aurel Scheibler. The mainstay of the exhibition is formed by a group of recent works executed on canvas and cutout colored Plexiglas onto which the artist applied vibrant, often electrifying colors in acrylic. Their irregular shapes, unexpected color combinations and free-flowing configurations continue the quest for space awareness that Reusch initiated over six decades ago.

“Im Prinzip der Ersten Abteilung” takes place from September 21 until November 9 and will open on Friday September 20. A selection of works by Erich Reusch will also be featured during *abc* (Art Berlin Contemporary), the Berlin art fair which runs from September 19 through 22 at Gleisdreieck.

The fact that space is vibrant, pulsing, a continuously changing and morphing entity that has an impact on and interacts with the beings and things that enter its territory, plays a vital part in Reusch’s approach. Rendering this space visible and tangible, making the observer intensely aware of its vitality and energy are the motifs that underlie his creations, be they sculpture, painting, relief, acoustic or light installations or Plexiglas cutouts.

While studying architecture and art at the academy, Erich Reusch became aware of his fascination with space and the way it can be experienced by accidentally looking at a white plaster cube meant to be a pedestal, scattered among figurative sculptures. The affinity and correlation of this cube with the surrounding space, so completely absent in the figurative works, caught his eye and triggered the formulation of what would become the pillars of his artistic search: the dissolution of mass and volume in sculpture, the awareness of space as a constantly changing field of forces and the contingent, undogmatic and free character of creation.

The evolution in Reusch’s work is a flow which at all stages is influenced and guided by these notions. The break with the occidental sculpture tradition happened in 1951 when he created “Figur”, a plaster model displaying a figure in a handstand position, the head formed as one solid block with the plinth, the arms cut midway, the torso and legs well-modeled. It is a rare mix of anatomical finesse with rudimentary presentation and shows Reusch’s determined decision to break loose. “Save the figure,” his professor deplored. “The figure is beyond saving,” replied Reusch.

The insight that mass ‘occupies’ space instead of visualizing it, started Reusch’s search for creations that challenge the traditional way of looking and force the viewer to experience space in its many-layered-ness and virtual endlessness. ‘Gravitation’ in particular, required a new interpretation, a newly defined relationship to the wide, cosmic space. With Giacometti’s ‘Walking Man’, the first indication of a simultaneous existence of a larger space became visualized. Reusch however, looked for an even larger presentation of space, with larger distances involved. He conceived of a work that consists of one form in Cologne and one form in Munich and the information that both are existent and connected. This would create the awareness of a 500 km long

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sculpture. The fact that relinquishing synchronized observation and the simultaneity of seeing in favor of the knowledge of the distances involved creates a new space, was a notion which pre-occupied the artist intensely.

Reusch certainly caught that 'something' in the air before many others did. The works of the American Minimalists, in their own country as well as in Europe heralded as the initiators of a revolutionary new way of expression and observation, followed years after he developed sculpture that presented a very clear and determined change of direction. In the early fifties, Reusch made his first reliefs: transparent perforated Plexiglas boards with attached rods in various lengths and colors sticking out into space and preventing the possibility of an 'all at once' visual intake. The different directions, movements and dimensions that the works evoke and reveal make the various states of being of the surrounding space amply clear. Around the same time (and long before Carl André or Richard Serra started the practice), he developed the first horizontal sculptures: metal squares or rectangles in various heights that are placed directly onto the ground and lead the viewer's gaze into previously ignored layers of vision. In the sixties and seventies, he designed large electrostatic Plexiglas boxes in which fine particles of sooth float around and form ever-changing patterns that cling to the glass and visualize space in ever-changing ways. Concepts for acoustic and light installations which by means of magnetic, acoustic or light sensitive waves raise space awareness, were to follow. Throughout the oeuvre, every creation is an attempt to make the observer conscious of the fact that space is made up of forces and movement, that a continuous exchange and interchange takes place, that the 'present' and the 'not-present' or 'in between' share and shape space.

In 1998, Manfred Schneckeburger described an installation that Reusch created in 1979 as follows: "They (the sculptures) create a field of gravitation that expands, contracts and flows over borders. Instead of axial streamlining there is spacious spreading. Instead of fixed orientation there is general exploration. Instead of the clear-cut view there is the languid observation...".<sup>1</sup> With these few, well-put lines of observation, Schneckeburger captured the quintessence of Reusch's entire oeuvre.

"Im Prinzip der Ersten Abteilung" displays paintings and painted Plexiglas cutouts which challenge our perception of 'space as we know it'. The whimsicality suggested by the use of irregular shapes and contrasting colors and the completely flexible and unprescribed hanging modes create areas of tension and release, of 'here' and 'not-here' and guide the gaze to previously unnoticed angles and perspectives. With a lingering sense of the possibility of a spatial utopia – alluded to by his lighthearted statement "*Es kann immer auch ganz anders sein.*" ("*It can always be completely different*") – Reusch offers space the full expression of her abundant and absolute freedom.

Erich Reusch (b. 1925) was born in Wittenberg-Lutherstal on the river Elbe. He studied architecture and arts at the College of Fine Arts in Berlin and practiced for more than a decade as an independent architect. From 1975 until 1990, he held the professorship for "Integration of Fine Art and Architecture" at the Arts Academy in Düsseldorf. Erich Reusch is an honorary member at the Arts Academy Düsseldorf. He lives and works in Neuenrade, Germany.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Schneckeburger, in: Erich Reusch – Arbeiten 1954 – 1998, exh. cat. Kunstmuseum Bonn, Jan 29 – March 22, 1998, 1998.