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Sinta Werner
Modul im Modell

In her photographic and sculptural works, Sinta Werner investigates how spatial perception is continually reconstituted through the interplay of material, light, and movement. Her point of departure is often architectural structures and modernist systems of order, whose geometric clarity she takes up and transfers into new spatial contexts. Where the mid-century modernist grid promised rationality and static structure, Werner's works reclaim an embodied, situated perspective. Only through moving around them do rigid systems dissolve, and space becomes a processual experience for viewers. Glass has been a central material in Werner's work in recent years, appearing simultaneously as image carrier, image motif, and optical filter.

In the analogue photograms of the series *Modul im Modell* (Module in Model), Sinta Werner develops modular architectures from simple glass boxes stacked in serial formations, evoking Structuralism or *Neues Bauen*. The glass boxes initially emerge as bright traces against a dark background, appearing as a photographic negative. To produce a positive image, Werner makes a contact print by placing the photogram once more on unexposed paper and exposing it. A nearby light source reverses the logic of central perspective, causing the vanishing lines to diverge. Baryta paper dried to a high gloss heightens the ambiguity between surface and spatial depth: its reflective finish makes the image appear like a view through a pane of glass, while the mottled texture of the baryta layer simultaneously foregrounds the materiality of the photographic paper. In this body of work, glass can be experienced in three ways: as a flat image, as an actual object mounted onto the surface, and as a light-modulating material through which patterns of light and shadow are generated in the darkroom.

Self-Exposure – Selbstbelichtung extends this investigation of the conditions of photography as a projection onto itself. Here, the unexposed photographic paper itself functions as sculptural material: cut and folded in the darkroom, the flat image carrier assumes a three-dimensional form. Depicted and actual folds overlap, producing a doubling, while the work simultaneously divides into the semantic layers of image carrier and motif. The coloured, fragmentary triangular forms created with retouching ink evoke prisms, spectral refraction, and crystalline structures. Tapered sections of coloured glass placed directly in front of the images continue these retouched colourations in material form. The photographic paper no longer represents something external to itself; rather, it becomes the object of its own photographic inscription. It folds, casts shadows, and responds to light. The work visibly bears the trace of this physical handling.

The two sculptures *Flüchtige Fügung - Raum als Passage* (Transient Configuration - Space as Passage) examine the grid as a central model of modern ordering: one that structures space, provides orientation, and embodies the notion of a rationally apprehensible world. The orthogonal arrangement of glass planes takes up this order, defined by geometry and clear structures. The modernist grid stands for rationality and progress, yet it also entails homogenisation, standardisation, and the subordination of the body to abstract systems. In these sculptures, this apparent stability is transformed through transparency, colour, and reflection into an unstable, ephemeral configuration. Unlike in a functional building, interior and exterior, space and boundary, cannot be clearly separated. Space emerges here as a processual experience that unfolds only through walking, shifts in perspective, and bodily proximity. The advent of modern glass architecture was bound up with the promise of transparency and publicness. Yet this ideal of transparency can also reverse into its

opposite: glass-like openness, once understood as a democratisation of the gaze, becomes, in the age of surveillance media, a structure of permanent visibility and control.

In the two works *Die doppelte Öffnung - Verschränkte Sicht* (Double Opening - An Intertwined Perspective), glass becomes both image carrier and the motif of the window. Its transparency and planar quality connect it directly with the window as a metaphor for the image. This idea has shaped European art history since the Renaissance: Leon Battista Alberti described the picture plane as an “open window” through which the gaze enters a constructed pictorial space. The window thus denotes both a boundary and an opening: it separates the viewer from the depicted space while nevertheless allowing a view into it. This ambivalence between enclosure and transparency becomes spatially tangible in Werner’s works.

The subject of the photo-objects is Hansaplatz in Berlin, situated in the gallery’s immediate vicinity: an architectural epicentre of West German post-war modernism, built for the 1957 *Interbau* as part of an international architectural competition for social housing. The photographs reveal how the canopies, supports, and gridded structures of its shopping arcade direct the gaze, interlock spaces, and dissolve boundaries between interior and exterior: the architecture frames itself. Sinta Werner doubles this photographed self-framing by translating it into a three-dimensional arrangement. Panes of glass bearing transparent black-and-white photographs are mounted at right angles to one another in steel frames on the wall, so that the tiled façade of the arcade is staggered across overlapping perspectives. As a geometric system of order, the grid initially points to flatness, dividing a surface into clearly bounded rectangles. At the same time, it serves as an instrument for constructing perspective and spatiality. The grid’s dual nature lies precisely in this tipping point between flatness and illusion: it rigorously organises the gaze geometrically while simultaneously opening a space for fiction and transcendence.

While *Die doppelte Öffnung - Verschränkte Sicht* (Double Opening - An Intertwined Perspective) reorders architecture through layering and shifts in perspective, *Gerüst und Gewand* (Frame and Garment) turns to a different relationship between structure and surface. The series takes as its point of departure the residential and commercial complex designed by Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak in Wrocław in the 1970s. Modern architecture enabled the outer skin to be separated from the load-bearing structure and shaped as an autonomous envelope. The façade not only divides interior from exterior but also serves as a support for decoration. The principle of cladding makes it appear as a play of veiling and unveiling, especially evident in the façade’s curved concrete panels. This playful formal language is remarkable for a period shaped by socialist collectivism and the ideal of an egalitarian society, in which aesthetics often receded in favour of expediency or economy.

Laser cuts take up the basic forms of the façade and, through abstraction, focus attention on the essential elements of the architectural design. By intervening in the photographic surface with laser cuts, the work takes on the appearance of a model. Werner thus heightens the buildings’ forward-looking, utopian character. At the same time, the tactile doubling of the geometric structures lends the image a hyperreal quality, like a miniature world. The details invite viewers to move closer; the pictorial space opens up. Its division into four vertical layers recalls the flatness of theatre scenery. Viewed from the front, the image appears as a hybrid of picture and spatial representation; viewed from the side, however, this illusionism breaks apart. One looks behind the scenes, at structures that repeat themselves.