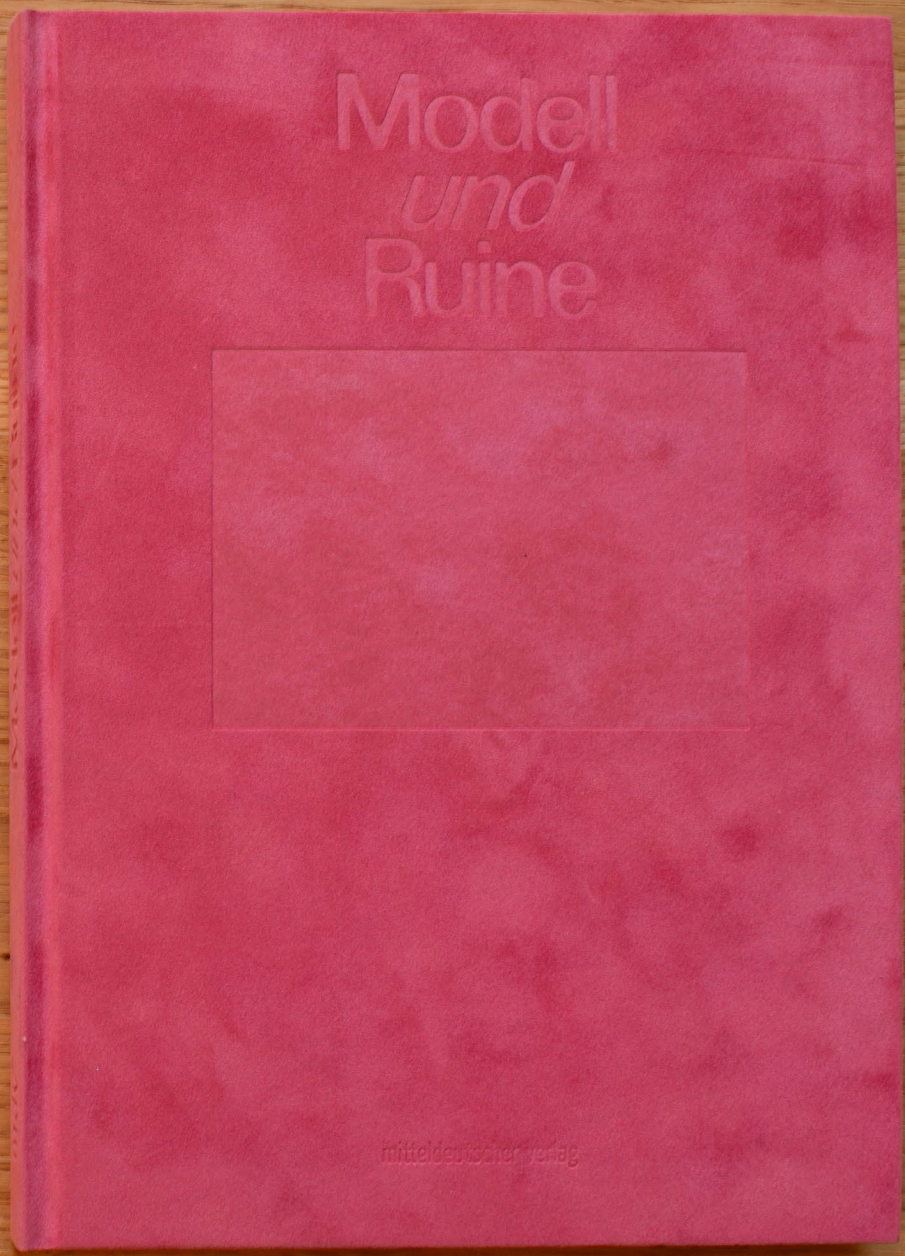
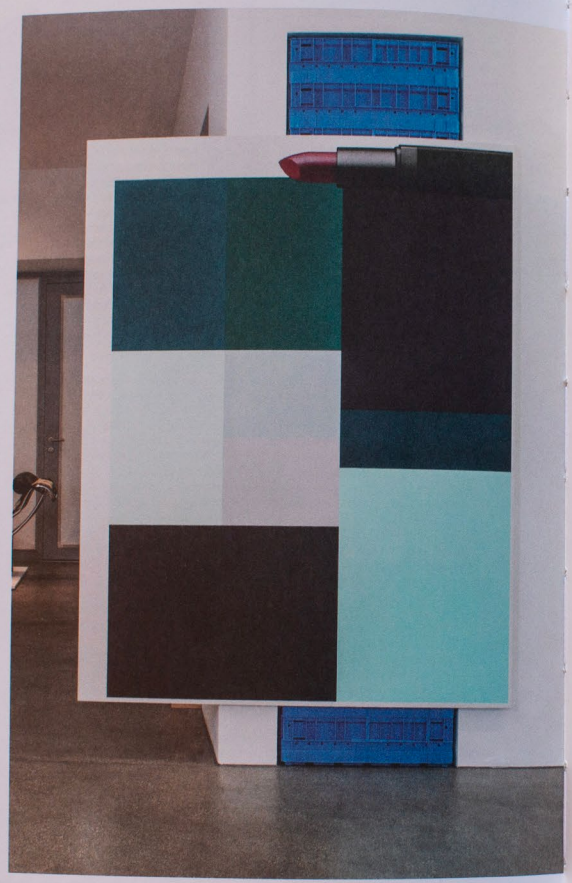

Modell
und
Ruine
mitteldeutscher verlag



Romain Löser, *On Demand*, Ausstellungsansicht, Galerie Heinzer-Reszler, 2016

Alexander Klose: Deine malerische und im weiteren Sinne bildnerische Arbeit wirkt auf den ersten Blick abstrakt und formal. Doch sie nimmt sehr konkret Bezug auf die Welt der Lager und des Transports und deren standardisierte Kisten. Maler interessieren sich klassischerweise für Landschaften oder Körper, für Stimmungen des Himmels oder autopoietische Oberflächenstrukturen. Du betrachtest Plastikkisten. Was fasziniert dich daran?

Romain Löser: In einem seiner Filme verreist Charlie Chaplin. Als sein Koffer gepackt und zugeklappt ist, stellt er fest, dass überall Hosenbeine, Ärmel und Socken heraushängen; er greift also zur Schere und schneidet alles ab, was übersteht. Ich finde, von standardisierten Behältern geht eine ganz ähnliche Gewalt aus.

AK: In unserem klassizistischen Park und Ausstellungsparcours bespielst du das ehemalige Gästehaus, das Fremdenhaus. Von außen verriegelst und versperrst du Fenster und Türen. Im Inneren stellst du Paletten voller hermetisch gefalteter Plastikkisten und Malereien aus. Ist Ausgrenzung für dich eine moderne Ruine?

RL: Aus kapitalistischer Sicht ist Ausgrenzung etwas Positives. Mir fällt gerade ein, dass meine erste Platte der Neubauten ein Cover-Kauf war, weil ich den Schriftzug „Einstürzende Neubauten" so geil fand. Gestapelte standardisierte Kunststoffkisten sind auf jeden Fall ein Zeichen für versiegelte, geschlossene und umweltbelastende Systeme. Sie sollen auch heilbringende Einheiten sein – aber die Hegemonie der kapitalistischen Weltordnung verliert an Glaubwürdigkeit.

AK: Vom Leitungsteam der documenta 12, 2007, stammt die Frage: „Ist die Moderne unsere Antike?" Würdest du sagen, dass du die Logistik, die ja etwas eminent Modernes ist, in vergleichbarer Form als einen Relikt-zusammenhang betrachtest, auf den du dich in einer quasi archäologischen Tätigkeit beziehst?

RL: Diese standardisierte Plastikkiste, von der du sprichst, – der Kleinladungsträger – wurde vom Verband der Automobilindustrie zur Optimierung der Logistikketten entwickelt. Aber es ist ihm egal, ob er Teile für einen Verbrennungsmotor oder einen E-Antrieb transportiert. Sein Versprechen ist wichtig: Ein reibungsfreier Ablauf generiert mehr zufriedene Kunden und mehr Gewinn. Die Frage ist nur, wie viele zufriedene Kunden kann es weltweit geben? Hier beginnt der Wettlauf um Rohstoffe, in dem wir uns befinden. Die Kiste kann nur ein Behälter für Inhalte sein. Das eigentliche Relikt scheint mir viel mehr der Glaube an den geordneten Gang der Dinge zu sein, der angeblich mit klaren Formen und Regeln einhergeht.

AK: Rosalind Krauss hat in einem bekannten Aufsatz über das Raster auf die religiösen bzw. spirituellen Gehalte der klassischen Abstraktion und Farbfeldmalerei hingewiesen. Wörtlich schreibt sie von einer „mythischen Kraft" der geometrischen Abstraktion, die es den Künstlern der westlichen Zwischen- und Nachkriegsmoderne zu erlauben schien, die überall um sie herum vor sich gehenden Rationalisierungsprozesse mit einer ganzheitlichen, spirituellen Sicht auf die Welt im Sinne eines höheren Universalismus zu versöhnen. In deinen Arbeiten leiten sich die Maße, Formen, Proportionen und Farben von der Logistik als transzendentaler und zugleich ganz konkret Formen und Farben gebender Instanz ab. Sie also bilden diesen modernen „Goldgrund" oder „Ideenhimmel" des Rasters. In welcher Beziehung siehst du dich zu der klassischen Avantgarde? Welche Bedeutung haben die Farbfelder für dich?

RL: Transzendenz hört sich an wie stillgelegt, aber Empathie ist mir wichtig. Eine Ironie der Geschichte liegt in der massiven Propagierung des *Abstract Expressionism* als rein amerikanischer Kunstrichtung, obwohl die meisten dieser Künstler Bezug auf die russische Avantgarde nahmen. Vielleicht legitimiert Rosalind Krauss auch nur ein amerikanisches Erbe? Die Planung von Manhattan als Raster stammt aus einer Zeit, in der die Eltern von Malevič sich noch nicht einmal kannten. Mag sein, dass versucht wurde, dem *Grid* zu entkommen, indem man es transzendierte, verschwunden ist es nie. Seit den 1970er Jahren gibt es GPS. Wir sind mehr oder weniger mobile Punkte auf einem Raster, je nachdem, welchen Pass man hat und wie flüssig man ist. Digitalisierung macht die Maschen noch enger. Ich würde lieber das Lied von der Banalität des Rasters anstimmen: Es ist nicht radikal, sondern einfach nur pragmatisch und omnipräsent. Es steht für Kontrolle, systemische Gewalt, Ausbeutung und Expansion. Die Linien auf meinen Bildern entstehen durch angrenzende Flächen, und so sauber ich auch arbeiten mag, irgendwo hat jede Fläche ein Leck – Kontrolle ist ein Phantasma. Achille Mbembe spricht von einer Genealogie der Trennung und der Teilung, die Frantz Fanon schon beschreibt und (mindestens) das 19. und 20. Jahrhundert durchzieht. Grenzen können Orte der Begegnung und der Neugierde sein – wir können uns aber auch nur mit Gleichgesinnten auf die Schultern klopfen.

AK: Wenn sich nach unserer Interpretation die historischen modernen Bewegungen durch ihre je eigen und programmatisch gefasste Verklammerung von Vergangenheiten und Gegenwart bzw. Zukünften auszeichneten, wie würdest du dein eigenes Verhältnis zu diesen nicht mehr und noch nicht gegenwärtigen Zeiten bestimmen? Wie weit streckst du dich in die Zukunft, wie weit lehnst du dich in die Vergangenheit?

RL: Mit ausgestreckten Armen bin ich etwa 2,40 m lang. Und mit Michael Jacksons anti-gravity shoe kann ich mich etwa 45° in die Vergangenheit lehnen.


Modell
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English Supplement

Cornelius Grau

Kristina Tieke: In your wood, canvas and acrylic works you focus on everyday objects – bicycles, overhead projectors, fast food packaging. You give familiar objects a new image with extravagant colours. You shift things that we hold in our hands every day into an artistic context, placing them before our eyes as if we were seeing them for the first time. What fascinates you about trivial things, about our user-oriented world?

Cornelius Grau: The apparent simplicity. Everyday objects are just there, present in our everyday lives. People philosophize about favourite books or favourite films, but they probably hold a broom in their hands a lot more often. In terms of their content there's not so much to be said about such everyday objects. Most things have a clear function and a specific look. We've gotten used to them and tend to perceive them in terms of categories: a fork is a fork and can be used to eat. That's it! This clarity captivates me, this purity, which makes it possible to rediscover things and present them in new ways. But my thinking is often astonishingly formal as well. I have built replicas of tree stumps lying on the ground because I wanted to study vertical cylinders.

KT: Last year you curated the exhibition *Zur Größe bestimmt!* [Destined for Greatness!] at the Künstlerhaus Dortmund. A title that finds an ironic balance between defiance and hubris. Do these qualities also describe your own work?

CG: Yes, of course. There's often a certain irony. And defiance. Why does everything always have to be so important? So big? So meaningful? I question this a lot. But this also includes the admission that it sometimes just makes sense. The pictures in the exhibition had to, for example, be big in order to generate their intended effect. My exhibition titles are nevertheless often ironic, defiant or misleading. I once did a gallery exhibition called *New Media*. Someone who doesn't know my work probably expected video works and not these colour sculptures of electric appliances. At a time when I was really annoyed by pretentious artistic rhetoric and cultural opportunism I commented on this with the exhibition title *Alles Zirkus* [Everything's a Circus], a show in which circus accessories were relatively mundanely presented in a display window. I also utilize clichéd titles, like *Neue Malerei* [New Painting] for the first and only exhibition of mine to only include paintings. That was a little presumptuous of me.

To come back to your original question. Early on in my artistic career I strove to counter the arrogant tendencies of the art world with the banality of objects that I presented in a new way. Whereas for others this was meant to be symbolic of something and that was supposed to express a meaningful critical view of something else, a vacuum cleaner that I built was only intended to be a vacuum cleaner.

KT: ... and a catapult a catapult. Your work *Katapult* [Catapult] from 2011 has a kind of Asterix-like bombshell effect. One can almost hear the WHAMs and BAMs and BOOMs when the imaginary bullets reduce the portentous trappings to rubble. That would have been perfect for the Georgengarten with its references to Rome. Now you are placing three sculptures that look like they came from a stage set in the field between the Castle and Sphinx Portal, in the middle of this highly symbolic scenery. How do you see the relationship between your work and art historical traditions?

CG: I grew up in the 1990s, so I was really raised postmodern. I draw on a lot of art traditions from the 20th century. For instance the formal clarity of De Stijl in terms of form and colour can be found in my works. My colour contrasts, my brushwork and, to be honest, my handcraft style tend more to follow the idiom of Expressionism. I find orientation, for example, in Minimalism's focus on objects and the everyday iconography of Pop Art. Up until now I have been more traditional in my use of media. I make sculptures primarily from wood, paint on canvas and work with letterpress printing techniques. I've hardly done anything with photography or performance. I enjoy conquering other territories after they have in some form or another become established and developed their own clichés. In that sense I will probably always remain classic in terms of medium.

With the objects that I construct I attempt as far as possible to create archetypes. Combined with their everyday quality and the reduction to geometrical forms and plain colours, this often generates a nostalgic effect. In the projects for *Model and Ruin* time and tradition also play a role in terms of content. I am erecting, among other things, the replica of an old dovecote, which will be connected to a network hub. As a way of contrasting the traditional carrier pigeon, an old form of communication, with modern internet. A gigantic cigarette lighter-USB adapter will be seen sticking out of the ground like the capital of a column that's fallen over, like an archeological artefact. Here the archaic meets the modern age. Next to this is an office ruin, though one isn't sure if it's a reference to an impending catastrophe or could be, like all ruins, a remnant from bygone days, but seen from a future perspective, a kind of premature nostalgia.

KT: Your objects look as if they might actually work. You have great design aspirations. In terms of colour you prefer blue, red and yellow. Reduction is a dominant principle – less is more. To what extent is the proximity to Bauhaus that I'm suggesting here a sensible way to approach your work?

CG: I myself draw on a similarly clear language of forms. My sculptures consist of clear lines and clear planes. So I do have design aspirations and consciously search for prototypical forms.

Bauhaus pursues a universal ideal of quasi expansive design as a total work of art. A house is completely fitted with furniture, art and household objects. Then entire residential districts or complex industrial facilities are designed. After that complete cities and even industrial nations could follow. The goal appears to be ... the whole world.

I'm less revolutionary. I'm not following some kind of overall master plan above and beyond an exhibition project. For me it's more like a sticker book that you slowly fill. Yet by means of my to date universally applicable style I am with each sculpture, with each everyday object and with each exhibition getting closer and closer to a total and complete new presentation of the world.

Romain Löser

Alexander Klose: Your painting and in the broadest sense pictorial work seems at first glance to be abstract and formal. Yet it makes specific reference to the world of warehouses and transport and its standardized boxes. Painters are usually interested in landscapes or bodies, in the moods or colourings of the sky or autopoietic surface structures. You scrutinize plastic boxes. What do you find so fascinating about them?

Romain Löser: In one of his films Charlie Chaplin goes on a trip. After he has packed and closed his suitcase he realizes that pant legs, sleeves and socks are hanging out from all sides. So he takes a pair of scissors and cuts everything off that's hanging out. I think that standardized containers exercise a very similar violence.

AK: In our classicist park and exhibition parcours you've reworked the former guest house, the Fremdenhaus. Outside you've bolted and blockaded windows and doors. Inside you've placed pallets full of hermetically folded plastic boxes and paintings on display. Is exclusion a modern ruin for you?

RL: From a capitalistic perspective exclusion is something positive. It occurs to me that I bought my first album by Einstürzende Neubauten because of its cover – I found the "Einstürzende Neubauten" logo so cool. Standardized plastic boxes stacked on top of each other are definitely a symbol of closed, sealed, environmentally harmful systems. They are also supposed to be salutary units – yet the hegemony of the capitalistic world order is becoming less and less credible.

AK: The team of directors of documenta 12 in 2007 formulated the question: "Is modernity our antiquity?" Would you say that you view logistics, something eminently modern, in a similar way as relicts, which you make reference to in the course of your quasi archaeological activities?

RL: The standardized plastic box that you're talking about – the small load carrier – was developed by the German Automobile Industry Association in order to optimize logistic supply chains. But this box doesn't care if it's transporting combustion engines or electric actuators. It holds an important promise: frictionless processes generate more satisfied customers and greater profits. The question is: how many satisfied customers can there be in the world? This is the starting point for the race for raw materials that we now find ourselves in. The box can only transport content. It seems to me that the real relict is the belief in a systematic order that seems to operate according to clear rules and forms.

AK: In a well-known essay about the grid, Rosalind Krauss refers to the religious or spiritual nature of classical abstraction and colour-field painting. She writes literally of a "mythical force" in geometric abstraction which appears to allow modernist artists of the interwar and post-war periods to reconcile the rationalization processes taking place all around them with a holistic, spiritual view of the world, a more exalted universalism. In your works the dimensions, shapes, proportions and colours are derived from logistics as a transcendental entity that nevertheless yields very specific shapes and colours. They also create the modern "gold ground" or "universe of ideas" contained in the grid. How do you relate to the classic avantgarde? What significance do colour fields have for you?

RL: Transcendence sounds like something out of service, but empathy is important to me. There's a historical irony in the massive propagation of *abstract expressionism* as a completely American artistic trend, as the point of reference for most of these artists was the Russian avantgarde. Maybe Rosalind Krauss is only trying to corroborate the movement's American legacy? The development of Manhattan as a grid originates from a time when Malevič's parents didn't even know each other yet. Maybe there was an attempt to escape the grid by transcending it, but it has never gone away.

GPS has been around since the 1970s. We are more or less mobile points on a grid, depending on which passport we have and how much money. Digitalization serves to tighten the net.

I would rather sing about the banality of the grid: it isn't radical, it's just pragmatic and omnipresent. It stands for surveillance, systematic violence, exploitation and expansion. The lines in my pictures are yielded by contiguous surfaces, and regardless how cleanly I work, every surface has a leak somewhere – control is an illusion.

Achille Mbembe speaks of a geneaology of the separation and division that Frantz Fanon had already described and that permeated (at least) the 19th and 20th centuries. Borders can be locations of encounter and curiosity – or we and our kind can stand around patting each other on the back.

AK: If according to our interpretation historical modern movements are characterized by their individual, programmatically defined embracing of past epochs, the present and/or the future, how would you describe your own relation to foregone eras or those yet to come? How far forwards into the future do you stretch, how far back into the past do you lean?

RL: If I raise my arms as high as I can I am 2.4 metres tall. And with Michael Jackson's anti-gravity shoes I can lean back about 45° into the past.

Andrea Pichl

Daniel Herrmann: In some of your works you play with the floor plan areas of residential buildings from the post-war modernist period, converting them into space-filling sculptures. Other installations are reminiscent of architectural models for public housing projects or socialistic commuter towns. The aesthetic that you examine and I would say modify here probably originates from the forms, surfaces and colours that were omnipresent during our childhood and youth. To what extent are your works biographical?

Andrea Pichl: That's a question that I'm often asked but that I can't answer briefly or at all, as it requires me to establish a distance from my own personality.

My works most certainly have biographical origins, but not only in terms of their aesthetic. Here I would like to cite a few passages from the text by Alexander Cammann, features editor at DIE ZEIT, in my recently released catalogue, as he addresses precisely this biographical issue as it relates to my work and explains it from his own point of view much better than