

Thomas Helbig is known for his freestanding sculptures that are viewable from all sides, such that they invite the viewer to walk around them, their richness of detail awakening ever new associations. They often enter into a dialogue with Helbig's virtually abstract paintings, which fascinate through their reduction to recognizable structures, out of which ever new images are capable of evolving. Helbig's new paintings are characterized by a certain existentialism of the medium as his means of reduction. The paintings consist of traces of paint that seem to have been pressed straight from the tube onto the canvas. An "S" takes shape, or some other letter, or figure or just a vestige of something or even almost nothing; but the emphasis must be on the "almost", for the work always stops short of the point of pure abstraction. The unpainted, monochrome background, a coloured fabric, becomes an object in its own right, seems to crease and fold of its own accord, as though the two-dimensional support aspires to become a sculpture. Lucio Fontana's "Spazialismo", the concept that turns surface into space, immediately comes to mind, though the negative and positive forms are inverted in Helbig's case. Lucio Fontana's philosophy of nothing – "which is not a destructive nothing, but a creative nothing" (Fontana) – also underlies Helbig's new sculptures. Kept in an old, disused cupboard, like a relic in a shrine, is an object of a bygone age, a fragment of a glass table, a "vestige of a broken backdrop world", a feature so often encountered in Helbig's work. Both objects have been rendered useless, destroyed, and hence robbed of their original function, but together they form something new and generate their own inspiring energy. Destruction, an essential aspect of Helbig's sculptures, may be interpreted as liberation, as an opening through and beyond the object. Thomas Helbig lives and works in Berlin. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich and at Goldsmith College in London. He has many international exhibitions to his name and his works are to be found in many renowned private and corporate collections.

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