

Colin Ardley, *Levels and Slopes* – Wall-Objects

The Stability of Fragility

Colin Ardley's wall-objects etch themselves deeply on the memory and leave behind indelible visual parables of stability and fragility. They create unease due to the stacked loading of interpenetrating, criss-crossing, irregular right angled and triangular cut planes and panels of wood and depafit*. At the same time they evoke a sense of repose as a whole, due to the finely balanced sum of all the assembled parts.

The apparent lightness of these tectonic constructions is underlined by the work which gives this exhibition its title, by the restrained natural colour of birchwood and by the white materials of which it is composed. To this is added the complex interplay of light and shade which reflects from the object itself. The works project from the wall into space and appear to be about to take off, arrested in a moment of assembling themselves, as if the state of suspension could, by the shifting of a segment, be suddenly interrupted. When one knows that in the case of these architechtonic elements no screws nor nails were used, at most the minimal placement of a dowel, then the awe in confrontatation with the complex structural configuration is increased.

Following the move of Markus Richter Gallery from Potsdam, Colin Ardley was introduced, in 2000 to a Berlin public and his work was last to be seen in the exhibition *Transatlantic Impulses* in 2010 at the Akademie der Künste (Curator: Markus Richter). He now returns to where he originally began: in the Schroederstrasse in Mitte.

The artist's wall objects are naturally more than enough in themselves and still one cannot help but reflect on whether these structures could be realised as large scale landscape, urban architectural sculptures or designed for building facades. That this single-minded art-maker, located far from the fashionable art market frippery, is himself aware of the ambiguity of object versus/and architecture is in the meantime evident from a number of large scale projects. In 2001 for example he built the traversible *ramp*, *Marking Time and Territory* in the then ruin of Schinkels Elisabeth Church in Berlin and last year he completed a large sculpture *Genius loci* which literally connects two pieces of architecture in the building-ensemble of the Deutsche Werkstätten Hellerau, near Dresden.

Colin Ardley captivates through the sincerity of his work, through the engendering of uncompromising forms, the thousands of single, seemingly accidental elements brought together in intensive work to create part forms, like a fragile chaos, which adds up to a whole. It embodies stability and serenity but does not deny the divergent forces under the consolidating cloak of counter-balance. Still more it accommodates these conflicting forces, integrating them in the complex structurally engineered totality.

I am very pleased to be able to present this exceptional artist in my new space, (in this for us familiar street), to both a new and old public.

H.N. Semjon 2011

* Depafit is an acid free hard foam material