

Triologue: Colin Ardley, Dittmar Krüger and Dirk Rathke

Exhibition duration: 13.12.2013 – 18.1.2014

Prologue:

No one could have guaranteed a few days ago that such a dialogue exhibition from three artists in a relatively small exhibition space could function – outwith the usual and omnipresent classical hanging in the *White Cube*.

My own experience in collaboration with these three artists, lead me towards this experiment, together with the knowledge that they know each relatively well and above all respect each other.

The common experience last summer in Erfurt, where they participated, on the occasion of the anniversary exhibition in the Forum für Konkrete Kunst, and under my direction, at the accompanying colloquium, where an artist's talk also took place (which has in the meantime been published by the Forum and is available at the gallery) welded the three artists together a little more. That was the moment, which lead to my weighing up following the words with deeds so to speak.

We came to the agreement that Dirk Rathke should conceive and carry out a wall painting which would form the basis for the interaction of the works. Colin Ardley and Dittmar Krüger approved the initial design at once.

Triologue

Dirk Rathke's shimmering silver wall painting dissects, with jagged downward and upward movements, the white cube of the gallery space. The impression is one of an imaginary airy space with idiosyncratic cubistically formed metal clouds. The image of some gigantic closing mechanism from a science fiction film with a precise, sharp-edged hydraulic locking system out of milled steel also comes to mind. At any moment it could close due to the rising or sinking of the sectional compartments.

It cannot be defined whether the silver grey surfaces lie in front of or behind the walls, whether they define negative or positive forms.

This willful wall painting serves as the basis from which to orchestrate the three artists differing works. Colin's wall objects have a specific viewing height laid down by the artist and therefore provided the starting point for the hanging height. This additional restriction created at the same time a challenge with regard to the free interplay of the exhibition space.

It made sense therefore that Colin Ardley commenced with the first act by hanging his most horizontally orientated and most spatially penetrating wall object, *Tropical Drift*. As a result Dittmar Krüger reacted by setting, one could almost say mirroring Ardley's work by hanging one of his largest cube-like wall works to be shown here, *O.T. (4/2011)*. In spite of its size it is restrained by its central silver area which simultaneously makes reference to the wall painting. The saturated orange on the flanking inner surfaces of the grey enclosed wall box is almost not perceptible on entering the space. As one crosses the room its power increases and it radiates into the space. Dirk Rathke then hung a blue three part, *Curved Canvas O.T. (#679)* as a counterpoint to this and in doing so provided a starting point and a reading direction within the space. The conspicuous right angle, formed where the canvases adjoin, seems to earth the energetic movement of the wall painting and to give it a point of departure. Then it proceeds blow for blow. In harmony and in contradiction the forms and the colours of the varying works follows. Colin Ardley's two paired works, *Decoy and Rise*, echo an ascending movement of the iceberg like form of the silver wall surface. This collaboration is to be understood as a intimate conversation challenging the two other artists to respond with their own works.

This move and counter move is like a chess game, but with three protagonists concurrently. Step for step, no checkmate.

The keystone of the spatial composition is formed not only in a proverbial sense by Dirk Rathke's large yellow, two part work *O.T. (# 678)*, hung high in the clouds and the small black–orange wall object *O.T. (4/2013)* by Dittmar Krüger hanging below. They conclude the reading direction of the room and at the same time open the view of the small left entrance wall where the fragile wall object *The Thin Red Line/Skimming* by Colin Ardley resides behind a plexi-glass case.

It was clear to all three artists and myself at that moment that the room installation was complete.

The experiment has been successful and a temporary, finely balanced and tensioned artistic synthesis of the work of all three artists has been achieved, This threesome-constellation is not a forgone conclusion. Dialogue exhibitions are not unusual in the gallery scene. Against this the interplay of three equal partners is a difficult matter, not only in a psychological sense, but above all if no outside person, for example a curator or mediator, has the last word. The mutual respect and esteem held by the artists has led to a restraint, each holds back a little and no competitive tensions are created. What has emerged is unity in spite of difference.