

Ursula Sax – *Blauer Salon*

1 December 2017 – 20 January 2018

In her solo-exhibition *Blauer Salon* Ursula Sax presents several new hanging and wall sculptures as part of a current series she started in 2016. She had a strong appearance with *Blue Bird/Blauer Vogel* during her last exhibition in 2016, which can be conceived as a prelude to the present one. The 4 m long hanging sculpture had then dominated the gallery's front room, and this confrontation in a confined space imparted a very unique presence onto the sculpture. Revealed is the experience of an archetype: an aerodynamically shaped flying object. The artist has reduced the form to the object's essential constituents: rear (nose), fuselage and wing.

Since the 1980ies the artist has been applying the principle of folding and unfolding of a basic form cut out of an aluminum plate. However, her folded works show a characteristic soft and organic curvature. The yellow aluminum *Dervish/Derwisch* from 1985 and the nine meters high hanging sculpture for the staircase in the Bundespostsozialamt (social services department of the Federal Post Office) in Stuttgart may serve as examples.

The style of Ursula Sax's present works is reduced and strictly geometrical; its radical character, however, is broken through the rare use of right angles. Starting from a seemingly rectangular plate and deliberately choosing to abolish the right angle, Ursula Sax develops exciting forms. The eye is irritated through the loss of the stabilizing effect of a 45° angle and attempts to grasp the contours of the object. The right angle stands for peace of mind and stability and belongs to our conventional repertoire of forms. When the artist now unfolds cut-out elements to both sides of the flat basic shape, she simultaneously conquers space, dynamising, as it were, the rigid plate, which she calls *Tafel* when arranged vertically. When the plate is tilted above the surface, a three-dimensional, asymmetrical hanging sculpture as, for example, a roof or house is formed. Through slitting and folding outwards of non-perpendicular shapes this dynamism is even enhanced. The sculpture experiences a constantly changing appearance, which is generally characteristic for the sculptural work of Ursula Sax. The artist is not satisfied with one main visible face, but tries to expand the three-dimensional structures into all directions. Ursula Sax developed such a concept of sculpture and its expansion into space already in the early 1970ies. Her still relevant and fresh but not realized *Model for a Large Sculpture/Modell für eine Großplastik* (1974) for the cross-shaped *Kreuzbauten* (ministerial buildings) in the former German capital Bonn already conveys this concept. However, these large-scale shapes (with a length of almost 35 m!), which have anticipated the work of Richard Serra by five years, are broken and equipped with tentacles that run in waves parallel to the sculpture's basic

movement. This never realized work of art still has an enormous auratic force, which to experience in real life is the interest of artists and gallerists alike...

Displaying the new works in the gallery space is an exciting venture, as the positioning of the mostly gentian blue, powder-coated hanging sculptures must be carefully coordinated. Each spatial shift of a sculpture changes the exhibition space and demands a well-balanced placement in relation to the other works. The colour gentian blue is what characterizes this exhibition. The usual signal yellow so characteristic of Ursula Sax's works (cf. *Looping*, one of her best-known public urban sculptures) is supplemented by another distinctive colour. The exhibition title *Blauer Salon* is a confident play on certain circumstances in art history and can be read as a visual manifesto, into which the artist has inscribed more than sixty years of experience as a sculptor marked by a constant minimization and radicalization of forms, at the same time taking the freedom of brushing the familiar and ordinary a little bit against the grain.

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