

Aus heiterem Himmel (II) [Out of the Blue]

Installation, Art30/Art Skulptur'99, Basel

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Daniela Keiser's installation is a condensation of mood, a poetic array of transcendental materiality, sublimely luminous and gently reflective. We willingly glide into the enchanting atmosphere, willingly let ourselves be seduced and bewildered. And yet we do want to understand and know. This (supposed) need imposes itself between work and viewer. We try to find a system and logic in the organic lack of order because we have learned that everything earthly and material can be traced back to a precise structure, even if that structure is microscopic in scale and therefore invisible. And because we have learned that such a law of nature exists, we look for the plan underlying the work of art. What genetic information has the artist incorporated into this work, which has the presence of an independent being?

The quest for an underlying system reveals several principles of order. The arrangement of the objects on the floor is determined by the two sources of light around which they are grouped in irregular concentric circles of increasing numeric density from inside out. The circles begin near the lamps with a dozen scattered product samples, followed by three dozen transparencies, an uncountable quantity of pills and lumps of sugar, and finally an array of drinking glasses. The items all have an approximate place of their own in relation to the centers of light. The arrangement within the peripheral belt of drinking glasses hovers between order and chaos. The drinking glasses are loosely lined up and grouped by typology: champagne glasses, beer mugs, shot glasses. Tape laid out on the floor like the trails left behind by snails link the center and the periphery. The spotlights in the middle illuminate and overlook the whole, forming the apex of a hierarchical system.

The operative impact of the principles underlying this order is minimal: we are not called upon to decode any complex ideas, for what we see are perfectly natural, almost obvious connections that can be named and that evoke associations. The glasses are clustered as if they were part of society, as if they were groups in which like-minded protagonists gravitate towards one another. In addition, the glasses resemble a cityscape, a model of rampant urbanist growth that has spiraled out of control, while the spotlights maybe read as both the sun and stage lighting. It is their blinding light that turns the tape into luminous trails and the drinking glasses into reflecting bodies of light.

Basically the entire scenario is full of promise, albeit unfulfilled. The lumps of sugar symbolize imbibing sweetened drinks with no regrets; the samples hold

out the hope of fragrant skin, of life with no headaches, of a body vitalized by magnesium. The array of glasses creates a party mood, sparkling clean and shiny in anticipation of the crowds to come. However, this impression is undermined by the coins placed in the glasses, hard currency that encroaches on the poetic array and unceremoniously turns the glasses into containers for collecting money. On the other hand, the coins also encourage play; it is tempting to practice tossing more coins into the glasses for good luck. The promise grows, transgressing the limits of the installation and expanding (potentially) into the acoustic appropriation of the space. Sounds of glasses clinked when drinking a toast or coins tinkling as they fall into them are suspended as promises *in the blue* – but then, so are the sounds evoked by the possibility of glasses shattered and breaking.

Translation: Catherine Schelbert