

Hanna Roeckle

Column

Dominique von Burg

Visitors are greeted by a stunning ensemble of striking columns that rise up directly from the floor. While their positioning is highly precise, their arrangement appears unconstrained. The columns measuring 163 x 52 x 34 cm are all formed from five lying polyhedrons stacked on top of one another so each appears as a mirror image of its neighbour. The polyhedrons take their structures from kaleidoscope images and from crystals and quasicrystals. The arrays of atoms or molecules in the latter are ordered but not strictly periodic. This arrangement gives the steles a zigzag silhouette and an air of rhythmical animation, as if they were dancing. The crystalline lateral edges of the columns seem to dissolve in a mysterious display of light and colour as the monochrome surfaces spray-coated with car lacquer shimmer alternately in blue, copper, green or golden hues depending on their location and the incident light.

Hanna Roeckle's constructivist-concrete approach unfolds through the interaction of serial works, reductionist tendencies and categories of order and variability in a multi-layered dialogue in which colours are sensually present. Light in the form of reflections, projections, radiant brilliance and shadow animates the steles. They interact with the exhibition space and with the audience through their changing appearance as beholders shift their own vantage points. The overall impression gained is that the columns appear to stop moving in the very instant the eye of the observer falls upon them. While this is typical for Hanna Roeckle's work, so often poised between motion and static states, it also reminds me of Herta Müller's story *Katzengeschrei* ("Cat Howling"). Müller, a German author who grew up in Romania, recounts in her tale that she was convinced as a child that cats talked to one another at night and that flowers and furniture changed their locations. She describes creeping into the room where her grandparents slept in the hope of catching sight of these wandering items of furniture. The enterprise was never crowned with success: whenever she opened the door to peek, the furniture would just have shifted back to its usual position. The author remained deeply convinced, however, that it must have been elsewhere only immediately beforehand. "I never discovered that it was not so, but always received confirmation that it was so."¹ This clearly also applies to the sometimes obvious and sometimes unfathomable connections between the individual steles. Their energy fields combine to form a total experience, a very specific fundamental note that reverberates throughout the entire exhibition space. The presence of the columns has a performative dimension which comes to light in their interactions and also in the individual characteristics of each.

A distant echo of Constantin Brancusi's "Endless Column" made in 1937/1938 from cast-iron rhombus-shaped double pyramids is perceptible. These compositions based on fundamental geometric solids, often polished, have powerfully influenced sculptural architecture since. In contrast to Hanna Roeckle, Brancusi's interest in basic geometrical shapes stemmed from a quest for abstraction and for archetypal forms. The lustre of polished surfaces is, however, something both artists have in common. The effect is to open works up to the space surrounding them and to facilitate transparent interaction between light as a sculpting element and shadow.

1 Herta Müller, audio book, Die Nacht ist aus Tinte gemacht (“The night is made of ink”), Berlin 2009.