

The Conquest of the Space Between

Friedemann Malsch

The decisive impetus to change direction then came in 1998 with an invitation to an artists' event at the Klinik in Zurich. In the garden Roeckle came across a forgotten once-ornamental pool, roughly circular in shape and long since repossessed by nature. She cleared it and cleaned it and discovered that it was still intact, including the outflow. Especially interesting was an asymmetrically positioned stone, presumably meant for frogs and the like. Roeckle refilled the pool with water, colored this with pigments, put in an underwater light source and covered the surface with a sheet of transparent plastic (fig. p. 170). The result was an intriguingly ambivalent situation that hovered between nature and art, painting, sculpture and space. The matt surface produced by the plastic and the water's reduced transparency due to the coloring created exactly the effects Roeckle was looking for. The change of light between day and night led to effects at more levels, which the artist investigated with much experimentation. The immediate outcome of this experience was the group *Fluktuationen und Okulare*¹ (Fluctuations and oculars). This concerns a white box, sealed on the inside, filled with colored water and in which are laid various pastille-like objects of acrylic resin. The highpoints of these are sometimes just below, sometimes just above the water level (fig. p. 164/165). These images, lying on the ground, are Roeckle's decisive step towards a new artistic strategy arising from a process of clarifying the content of her earlier work. At the same time, they point the way to an aesthetic language that is able to illustrate what Roeckle is aspiring to, with contemporary techniques and materials. The thematic focus is now on the space in which the coordinates of different content intersect. These coordinates lie between the poles of inwardness and seriality, between emotional and structural dimensions. They circumscribe the theme of a sense of life that vacillates between two existential desires: the desire for the intrinsic, for individuality, and the desire to be incorporated into systems, to be accepted into suprapersonal integrations. Making these aspects clear for all to see necessitated a whole range of evolutionary steps which first of all had to resolve another contradiction, namely that between the image and the object in space. In the pond experiment, Roeckle succeeded in linking these two aspects. This discovery now had to be transferred to the development of a single work of art. To start with, therefore, there came arrangements of different small "fluctuations," some taking up whole rooms. Hanna Roeckle's recent work marks a fascinating achievement at the interstices between painting and sculpture. The very manner in which she organizes the way her pictures come into being indicates deep reflection on the possibilities of painting today. That, in the process, she integrates painting into space reveals a very timely concept of space which, owing to electronic media, has been undergoing change for some time now, and which Michel de Certeau formulated admirably in 1980: "Space is a weave of moving elements. It is to some extent filled by the sum of the movements that evolve in it. It is thus a result of activities that give it a direction, relate it to time and cause it to function as an ambiguous entity of conflict programs and contractual agreements."