

Fluidum

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Recently, in a book¹ published by science historian Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, I came across a series of pictures by Hanna Roeckle presented under the title *Transportphänomene* (Transport Phenomena), in which the artist offered for discussion not only the pictures, but also a range of materials—images from science and research and quotations by writers that had interested the artist when she worked on the pictures.

It is fairly unusual for makers of art to lay bare the course of their artistic research and set it on equal terms next to the end product, “the work.” Roeckle has done this in order, on the one hand, to gain clarity about transport phenomena in systems so open as art represents, but also to explain that products of art never arise solely from questions of material and form but can also be derived from certain themes which at first sight have nothing to do with the realm of art, but rather with science, architecture, or technology.

There are in Roeckle’s art elements which, without being obvious, have accompanied her for years and are formulated time and again in different materials and media. From her preoccupation with architecture and architectural processes, for example, there has grown not only the recent rack system for her painting but also, from drawing rolled-up reinforcing bars on a building site, the elliptical form that occupies Roeckle both in painting and in objects. This is indicative of the artist’s fascination with open knowledge systems and branches of science that have a definite leaning toward the interdisciplinary: deep-sea research, molecular biology, and fiber optics. Between natural science, technology, and cultural science she pursues those areas of knowledge that have a pronounced scope for horizontal and vertical linkages. The ocean is not only a conceptual model for vertical layers of water, but also a linking system which through flow patterns, weather conditions, and geological circumstances extends across the whole globe and creates communicative elements

between the different factors. It is these communicative elements and links that Roeckle tries to put to use in her artistic work and to interpret for her own pictorial images and objects. A number of notions and forms have become prominent with time and with their repeated treatment: the notion of the cell and its nucleus that organizes all activities, the notion of the solid membrane that enables information to be transmitted outwards and from the outside. The form of the elliptical body which, depending on the context, establishes itself as the lens of an eye, a buoy in the water, a chip, or the deep-set jewel of a cell. The repeated appearance and disappearance of images.