

# CHRISTOPH WEBER GALERIE JOCELYN WOLFF

EXHIBITION FROM JANUARY 14 TO MARCH 10, 2012  
FROM TUESDAY TO SATURDAY  
2 TO 7 PM AND BY APPOINTMENT  
78, RUE JULIEN-LACROIX 75020 PARIS  
WWW.GALERIEWOLFF.COM

As Christoph Weber once stated in an interview, he is "interested solely in concepts". Be that as it may, the Austrian artist cannot be categorised as a conceptualist or classic conceptual artist. Rather, one might add, Weber is interested in transposing concepts, in a "methodological retracing" - as he himself defines his art strategy. Point of departure for his deliberations is not the creation of a non-derivative signature style, or stamping his work with an unmistakable hallmark, or focusing on one particular medium, but searching rather for a certain technique for their rendition and for criteria to determine why a particular artistic method must be used. He looks for that point in his works where a number of elements merge to form a whole in which his conceptual analysis, the idea behind an object is brought into the sensually perceptible form by the artistic process. Much like his historical antecedents in Minimal Art, Conceptual Art and Contextual Art, Christoph Weber is interested in investigating and shifting traditional mindsets and ways of seeing. He questions realities and systems of classification, institutional frameworks and their forms of representation, along with the moveable commodity presented by the traditional artwork.

Thus for instance an underlying idea in Minimal Art - the unbending claim to reality that sees the artwork not as the bearer of preconceived ideas but simply as the expression of its own self - undergoes a radical turn in Weber's work. Instead of being totally specified from the outset, the material together with its own physical properties and the manufacturing process determine the form of his works. "When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art", wrote Sol Lewitt in 1967. By contrast, in Weber's work concept and manufacturing process exist side by side on equal terms, with "chance" being allowed for and "deterioration" or change over time intended. While Weber has previously turned to materials like wax, papier maché, aluminium or synthetics, in his fourth solo show at Galerie Jocelyn Wolff he has solely employed concrete, which fits exceptionally well to his artistic strategy as a result of both of its symbolic power and its singular constitution. As a form of artificial stone, concrete undergoes various states, from fluid to rigid, and thus allows itself not only to be cast in a pre-determined form, but also to be worked sculpturally once it has hardened - either by additive processes that add supplementary material, or by the subtractive means of removing material. A particularly striking amalgam of construction and deconstruction can be seen in Weber's *Untitled (Gegenstück)* [= *Untitled (Counterpart)*].

Two massive, monolithic concrete slabs, divided from one another by a slender crack, force themselves into the path of the visitor entering the gallery. Viewed from the rear, the crack reveals a major breakage site at the bottom.

The one block is missing an enormous corner, while its counterpart has an addition that is so identical it reveals the artifice involved: one block was shaped precisely as that, then worked over in an arduous and performative act of destruction, before faithfully casting the resulting lacuna with silicon and adding its form to the second block. An act of rationally calculable construction has followed on from one of physical destruction that was the basic requisite for further construction. Central here is not a manifestation striving for depersonalised objectivity, but a facticity that themes artistic categories such as processuality, material, constitution and the physical presence of the "material" in space. In keeping with this, two seven-metre-long "bundles" of reinforced metal bars, which the concrete has wound round with almost organic elegance, interlock the two rooms of the gallery and appear to defy not only the customary ways in which we envisage the purposeful and functional use of the materials, but also the force of gravity. Seemingly fragile by comparison is the sheet of concrete with its irregular upward twist ("bent inversion") in the second gallery space, which appears to hover above the floor like a see-saw. While the gravel mixed into the concrete is clearly visible on its rough side, its extremely smooth and shiny lower face reveals the artificiality of the material.

When in his current show Weber places his concrete objects with all their weight in the space, or likewise hangs them from the wall or rests them carefully on the floor, he does far more than underline the protean manner in which the physical presence of the material changes - from massive to fragile to organic - and the resulting contextual shifts. He cites, reflects and deludes, points to the frailty of reality and its representations and perceptual mechanisms, destroys mindsets and classification systems only to replace them instantly with others. Weber is not interested "solely in concepts", nor in the pure process of making that elevates the artwork to an index of the physical act of creating, as Rosalind Krauss has described, nor in a self-referential, minimal manifestation based on the dictate of perceptual purism. If one wished to find a new term, it would doubtless be "processual minimalist conceptualism" which brings everything together.

Fiona Liewehr

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