

**[de]! com! po! si! tion NAmE [lat.; -/s]**

*Architectures* is the fourth series of the fifteen-year-long collaboration between painter Willy Oster and photographer SG Koezle. Whereas in *Raumversionen* (2008-2013) they were superimposing space with pictorial compositions, they now focus on architectural forms. But OSTER+KOEZLE continue to use photographs of rooms here, liberating architectonic details from their original context in order to create new formations. Architecture serves as starting point for these constructions, yet also constitutes their result.

The works of the *architectures*-series distort architectural photography to diverse degrees. While in some pictures, the room still can be reconstructed, in others it either dissolves into graphic or pictorial compositions, or the architectonic fragments gain a sculptural quality. In this process, OSTER+KOEZLE enact a constant transformation of cognitive possibilities in a pleasurable diversion, as space completely dissolves. When contemplating in front of the works, the initial confusion of our familiar perception will give way to a joyful 'Augenspiel' (visual game). Geometric bodies ascend from a monochromatic background: cubes, cuboids, or complex figures still display architectural forms, although they bear distortions of different degrees. Even the alleged familiar – like an apparent depth of a shaded wall – may be artificially constructed.

In some *architectures*, one still can experience a sense of space, for example through the tiled floor and skirting board in #130 and 134. However, this perceptibility is then reduced until any physical order becomes impossible and some forms gain graphic qualities equivalent to virtual constructs, like in #141 and 144.

If we perceive the chromatic image as an architectonic landscape, yet remaining sculptural fragments, the figure-ground-relationship becomes fluid and supposed architecture loses its function. An example is the dark coloured area in #136, which occupies the upper half of the picture and places the formations in an undefined space. The parallelogram in the lower left corner gives the impression of an open passageway behind the centered wall. This effect reveals itself as an optical illusion as soon as one focuses on the white surfaces: instead of a distance, we soon surprisingly discover a corner enclosed by two walls. Wherever the observer identifies these potential perspectives, the view will then continuously alternate between these, like a reverse image. It becomes obvious, that the artists act as architects: they do not only disrupt our spatial understanding, but also create ambivalent structures and new spaces.

OSTER+KOEZLE playfully push abstraction further, until any remaining spatial structure is dissolved completely. Seemingly trivial details – like the texture of a woodchip wallpaper, or the cast of a shadow – become important pictorial elements. Nevertheless, any spatial

impression dissolves gradually within the composition. For example, #165 almost gives a painterly impression, because the plain composition of coloured fields is overlapping and hiding the space.

As long as we attempt to reconstruct the room visually, we are doomed to fail. Sharp edges and cuts between building fragments and the coloured areas confuse the mind, because they disobey all rules of perspective.

The *architectures* give a sensual experience comparable to Richard Serra's *Props*. The large formats of OSTER+KOEZLE allow the viewer to visually enter them, similar to the impression of moving through Serra's monumental sculptures. Analogous to Serra – who opposes any narrative, affirmative, or metaphysic intention – OSTER+KOEZLE refer to the empirical reality by highlighting architecture's tactile materiality. Similar to the sculptor's steel-plates, their monochrome surfaces cut both our views and the space. They force us to expand our frame of reference. By incisions, concealing some parts and revealing others, the artists reorganise the relation between viewer and space. Representation of dimensions, lines and shapes are different than expected.

The artist-duo advance the abstraction of the room until it can no longer be reconstructed. As soon as we abandon the desire to do so and take the challenge of the optical game, many more possibilities are offered to us. By rotating and bevelling, architectonics are put in motion, so that solid forms are perpetually morphed, destroyed and rebuilt. At this point the destructive turns constructive. OSTER+KOEZLE research space: they reveal the essential shapes of architecture. As if under a microscope, they dissect the foundations of buildings by severing and eliminating their formal origins. This creative process of decomposition exposes invisible spatial frameworks. The resulting forms are not fragmented but conclusive. Erratic modes playfully fluctuate between rigidity and movement. If we accept the utopian character of *architectures*, they reveal infinite views and dimensions. The works incorporate a multitude of possible perspectives, accumulating highly diverse spatial experiences. Paradox is their only constant: they are equally monumental and minimalistic, sculptural and graphic, corporeal and even.