

CHARLOTTE POSENENSKE (1930-1985)

The same, but different

4 June - 29 July 2011

The Galerie Nelson-Freeman is pleased to present an exhibition of works by Charlotte Posenenske (1930 – 1985).

Charlotte Posenenske was born in Wiesbaden (Germany) in 1930. One of the most important artists of her generation, she developed a minimalist sculptural production based on industrial manufacturing (modeling, standardization, mass-production). Aesthetically, Posenenske's work relates to European Minimalism yet, the works' underpinning project of social and institutional criticism, places her among the Conceptualists. In 1968, she ended her short-lived career as an artist, claiming that, as far as she was concerned, Art could not have a sufficient political impact. She turned to sociology, the study of which she pursued until the end of her life in 1985. The artist leaves us with an eminently contemporary production, rediscovered over the last few years by the international scene. In 2005, a major retrospective celebrated her art at the Galerie im Taxispalais in Innsbruck (Austria) and also at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Siegen (Germany). In 2007, she was one of the highlights of the Documenta 12 (Kassel). In 2010, the Haus Konstruktiv in Zurich commemorated her work, along with that of Peter Roehr. That same year, the Parisian public (re)discovered Charlotte Posenenske through the exhibition *Pergola* at the Palais de Tokyo. In 2011, exhibitions were held at the John Hansard Gallery of Southampton (England) and at the Artist Space (New York). Her work is part of important collections amongst others Centre Pompidou (Paris), Tate Modern (London), The Museum of Modern Art (New York), Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago).

The same, but different – the title and the motto of the show – expresses one of the artist's main ideas: the variability, by which objects of her œuvre – the reliefs, the tubes and the revolving vanes – may be presented in ever-new installations. The square tubes of steel sheet or cardboard – the works for which the artist became famous – consist of a few different elements which may be combined into numerous installations – an endless variety of configuration. They may stand upright like a column, be amorphous with twists and turns, resemble a ventilation pipe, or even be hung from the ceiling as the one presented on the occasion of Documenta 12. Always the same elements, but in different installations, different places and different contexts outside the gallery (e.g. the central market or the main station). The installations may be continued in space and in time. Hence an installation from 2011 may be seen as the continuation of one made in 2006. The artwork is never finished, it is endless.

The artist concentrated her ideas in a statement (the so-called Manifesto) published in *Art International*, May 1968:

"The things I make are changeable,
as simple as possible,
reproducible.

They are components of the space because they are similar to
building elements,
they can always be rearranged into new combinations
or positions,
thereby altering space.

I leave this alteration to the consumer, who thereby again and again
participates in the production process.

The simplicity of the basic geometric forms is beautiful and

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suited to demonstrating the principles of rationalized alteration.

I make series

because I do not want to make individual pieces for individuals,
in order to have elements combinable within a system,
in order to make something that is repeatable, objective
and because it is economical.

The series could be prototypes for mass production.

Series DW (at Fischer's) is made of corrugated cardboard, which is
lightweight and inexpensive: a material for consumption. [...]"

Charlotte Posenenske.

Offenbach, February 11th, 1968.

Translated from the German by Judith Hayward.

All of Charlotte Posenenske's objects presented in the show are reconstructions of "prototypes for mass production", developed in 1967. The artist wanted a piece of art to be a commodity for everybody. The accessibility of her art is intended to be possible by the works' geometry, low price, outdoor installations and even participation of the "consumers" – the people who build and rebuild the installations (curators, gallery staff, collectors or the community) who were thus involved in the creation process – and responsible for the final result. Posenenske's oeuvre is an attempt to democratize art – against the pretension of ingenuity, exclusiveness and high price.