

In Between

Julian Heynen: The exhibition has two parts. The five sculptures at Haus Esters are quite autonomous works, independent from the given situation, whereas the sculptures and large drawings at Haus Lange seem to form something like an 'installation'.

To start with Haus Esters: Among the works from the last year or so there are some which open up a new field of materials, shapes and associations. I am thinking of works like "Sea" or "Border" in particular. Their surfaces are closed, their skin covers a volume, which I cannot see and thus control; I can only guess how it might look like inside. The interplay of inside and outside, of front and back, of positive and negative, which is so central to a lot of your works before, seems to function in a rather different way here. It establishes itself not so much in between the different points of view of the beholder but rather in between his perception of the surface and his ideas about the interior, the body. With the sculptures before it is a relationship between two seen facts so to speak. With these works it seems to be more of a relationship between a fact and a conjecture or speculation, between the practice of seeing and the theory of knowing or guessing. I have the feeling that this intensifies the uncertainty about the meaning of the shapes, about the relationship between seeing and naming in your work once more.

Richard Deacon: The use of a closed volume rather than an open volume comes out of the "Back Of My Hand"-series, – these are closed surfaces attached to the wall. The group of works that I have made for a ballet ("To My Face", 1987) were free standing but also used a similar front and back construction. In some senses the use of a worked surface as in the copper work ("Untitled", 1991) is intended to try to bring ideas about the inside on to the surface. At the same time yes it is true, it does introduce an element of uncertainty. In much of the other works the spectator was in the position of feeling occasionally outside and occasionally inside of the sculpture. The feeling of being engulfed by the object you are looking at does change the subject/object relationships. One has the sense of becoming, on occasion, the object for the sculpture as

much as the sculpture is object for you. Against this fluidity the openness of structure, exposed fixing devices etc. are statements of materiality. Of fact if you like. In the more recent works that you mentioned the subject and object relationship is more consistent. The object maintains its distance and therefore always remains an object for the perceiving subject. At the same time the result of that autonomy is that the nature of the object or the nature of the subject remains for the spectator a matter of guess work. It's like when I talk to you, then the contents of your subjectivity remain unknown to me.

J. H.: The sculpture titled "Border" exists in two more or less identical copies. And as such a twin it appears in both houses, and thus acts as a link between the two parts of the exhibition. But what interests me here is a formal, a structural aspect. In a way it is the first sculpture which rests flat on the ground instead of touching it with a few curved edges only. But that does not seem to question the autonomy of the sculpture in regard to the surrounding space nor its character as an object. May be that the independence or the otherness of this work is less constituted by its formal structure and its relationship to the space but rather by the associative interpretation of its shape. It seems to be a kind of hybrid. On one hand it reminds you of a technical, a well fabricated object, and on the other hand it looks like a big drop of some kind of liquid which is miraculously kept in its shape.

R. D.: The question of the autonomy has to do precisely with the material structures. The fact that there is an isolating skin always makes the object distant. However close you can get to it, it remains sealed to the spectator. And the fact that the skin obviously continues underneath the wooden object guarantees also its independence of the floor. Like many of the works it is possible to describe it in numerous ways in the way it conforms with certain kinds of things. It's quite aerodynamic for example. The question of its double existence makes most of those things conjectural anyway. The doubling actually puts authenticity into doubt.

J. H.: Among the new materials that you started to use there are things like plastic of polyester. That raises the

question of transparency or semitransparency. How did you get interested in it?

R. D.: I got interested in working with a different range of materials partly for very formal reasons. I became frustrated with joining bits of material together, and I wanted material that I could use like a skin. So I became interested in fibre-glass for example because it was possible to make a seamless surface. The attraction of working with plastic was that it was capable of deformation. By heating you can deform the surface. When it cools down again the surface stays in its place. So it is deformable in quite a simple way.

Having made one in an opaque material it occurred to me that to make a transparent one could be a far more interesting problem. The transparency also turned on its head the problem of the interior that we were discussing at the beginning. In "Sea" I don't think that there was a clear intention to make the thing I made. I became interested in making certain kinds of shapes, and made a lot of those. I had them in the studio for quite a long time before I came to a final solution of how I wanted them to be in a sculpture. The place where they were stacked actually has a very beautiful light. I think I was responding to that in wanting to have that glow that "Sea" has.

J. H.: Apart from your collaboration with dancers and may be apart from your outdoor sculpture, the exhibition at Haus Lange seems to be more of an 'installation' – to use this term from the 70s – than in other cases. That means that you have placed your work not only esthetically but intentionally in a certain relationship to the space of this building. The house becomes a necessary element of the whole arrangement. How would you describe this relationship or, to put it differently what is the subject of this 'installation'?

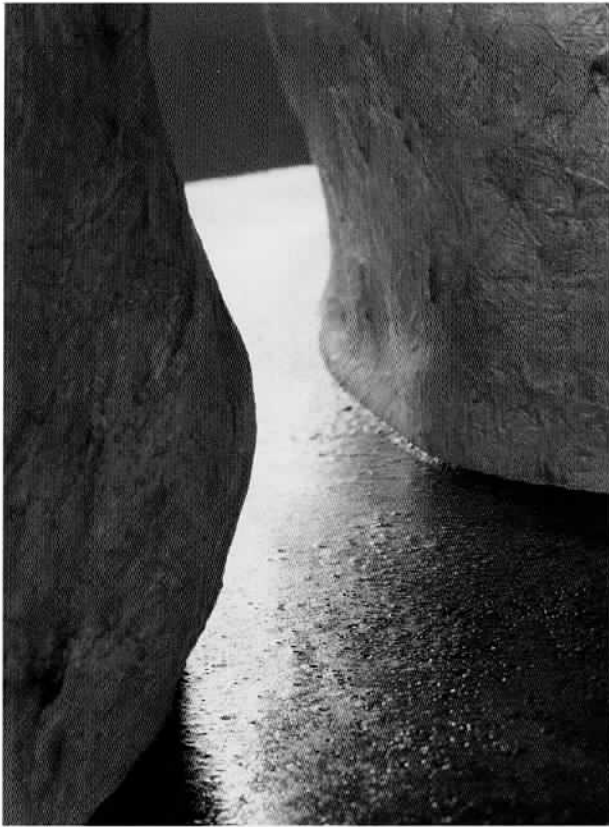
R. D.: I always have made exhibitions with some kind of conceptual organisation, whether it's a question of selecting works which are very different from each other in relation to material or construction or whatever. The relationship between Haus Esters and Haus Lange was conceived as being one full and one empty and a relationship between autonomy and dependence. I also had some idea

that the space in the architecture of Haus Lange should become dependent on the work rather than the work being dependent on the space. The intention was to somehow compress the sense of the volume of the building and materialize the work in between one place and another place – not just outside. I think in fact the interior relationships are much more involved than I imagined. But somehow the notion of pushing the works to the balconies and to the windows and also to the front of the house and of placing the two transparent works inside has to do with the notion of evacuating the interior of the house to its outside, and putting the spectator in the position of being always in the wrong place. The intention in Haus Esters on the other hand had somehow to do with the opposite, that would mean to fill it up. That's a very crude way to describe it, but it would be wrong to say that there is an installation in Haus Lange and an exhibition in Haus Esters, because if you imagine one without the other you would get a very different conception.

J. H.: In general, what is it that makes this zone in between, this transit between inside and outside so interesting to you?

R. D.: That's actually quite a complex question. If you look at them as models a lot of the earlier work had a transparent structure. They exist in a funny in-between-state, in between the spectator and the material world. They act as ways of looking at the world. I also tried from time to time to make the connection between the work and the world resemble the way in which speech exists in between individuals. The sculptures, as I described, have an ability to cross over between the subject-object-barrier. The use of the space in Haus Lange is in a sense a duplication or an expansion of that 'border' between the subject and an autonomous universe. The in-between is something that's shared. It's not private or personal and it's also not public. So therefore it's common but able to become a part of the spectator's subjectivity.

Your description of the work as being like particular kinds of things: Those things are themselves a part of the constructs of meaning that you have in relationship to the work. It has partly to do with your own subjective history and partly with something which is more public. In part they relate to the



Sea, 1991

Polyesterharz und Fiberglas
polyester and glass fibre
114 x 265 x 124 cm

experiences with one's own body as well as being like objects that exist in the world. At the same time the material character remains objective. Their expression – although that may not be the right word – is non-personal, though that doesn't mean they are not expressive.

J. H.: You once described the role of speech as "something in between", and that means something in between subject and object. The metaphorical figures of speech, which you have used as titles, point at that. Now the more recent sculptures have titles which are just one word. Does it mean a certain renunciation of ambiguity or do these new titles condense the function of the previous once?

R. D.: The new titles tend to be words which are both active and passive. They both are nouns and verbs or adjectives. Their relationship to the works are as ambiguous as before even though in the case of "Mammoth" it seems quite obvious what the relationship is. A 'border' can't be located, it's a line. But as a verb 'to border' something means to go around it. "Pack" is also obviously a noun and a verb and describes an animal group or something you can buy in a supermarket as well as an activity of putting things together. "Gutter" is something that goes along the side of a house, it is also a characteristic of a flame and also refers to a kind of low life. And "Pipe" is also both a physical object and an activity of playing. It also has a slight meaning in English of to induce somebody to follow as in the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Thus it has a second meaning of travelling. I don't think of the titles as labels anymore than I think of language as only observing or describing an independent universe. The titles are embedded in the works in the same way as speech is embedded in the world.

J. H.: Already as a villa and even more so as a museum the Haus Lange could be called a "House For Other People" to paraphrase the title of a series of smaller works. Would it be possible to compare certain aspects of this series with the general constellation of your exhibition at Haus Lange, or both at Haus Lange and Haus Esters?

R. D.: The general characteristics of the "Art For Other People"-series are that they are by title and by intention