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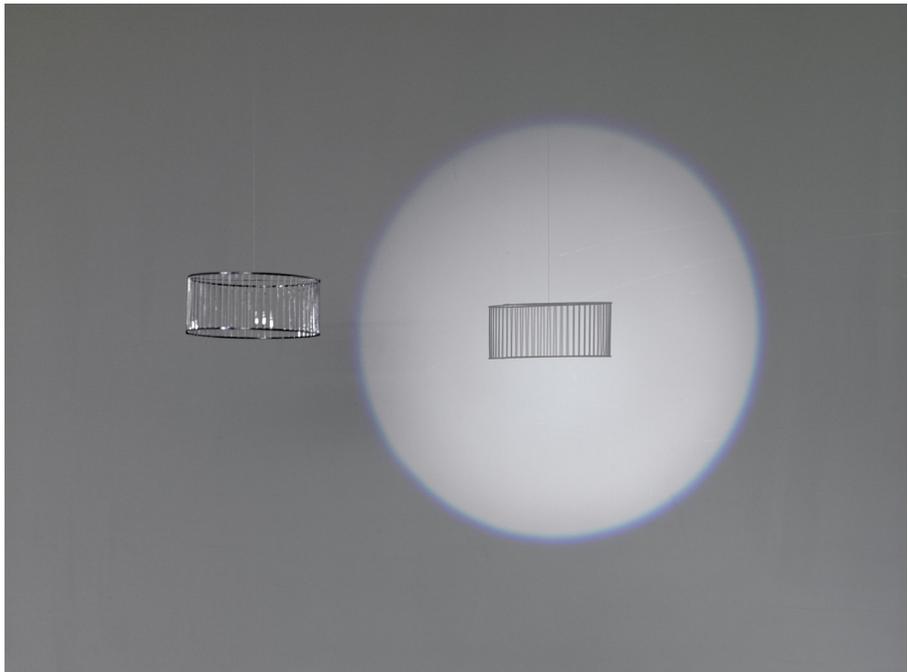
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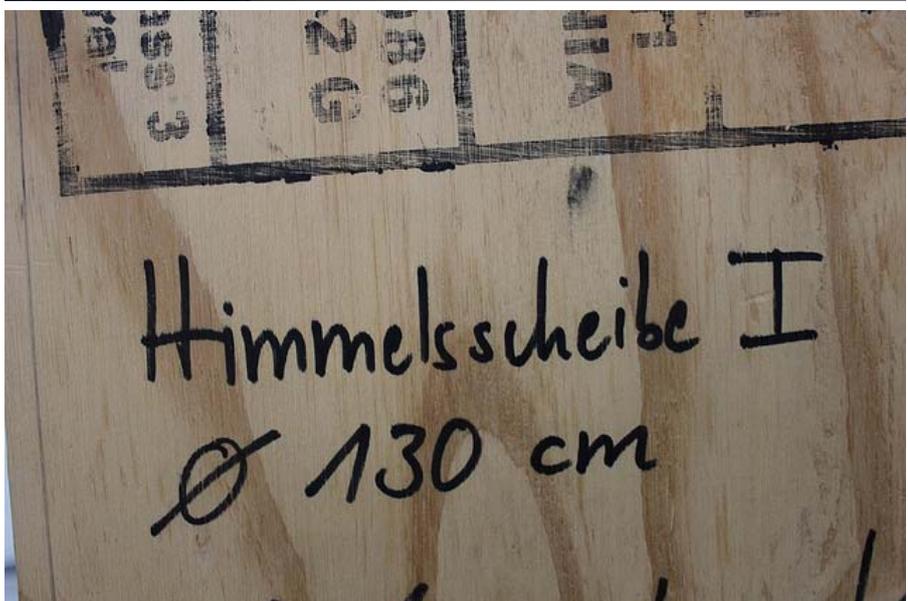
INTERVIEW: ULRICH VOGL

BY ANNA-LENA WERNER

Once upon a time, **Ulrich Vogl** wanted to become a diplomat, because the southern German installation artist loves to travel and to meet new people. His poetic artworks catalyze dreams. Employing light, shadows, mirrors and seemingly banal objects, they transform and manipulate rooms, introducing a re-thought handling of space - creating an illusionary dreamscape. Without disregarding carefulness and attention to details, Ulrich is curious and does not avoid coincidences in his working process. Openly and extremely warm-hearted, the Berlin-based artist recently shared work formations, stories of his everyday-life and his past with me. At his studio in the middle of Kreuzberg, artfridge was allowed to get a sneak preview of Ulrich's newest works.













Photos: Anna-Lena Werner / Photo 'Fenster': Ulrich Vogl

Anna-Lena Werner: Where did you grow up?

Ulrich Vogl: I was born in the Allgäu, in southern Germany. Later on I studied in Munich and then I moved to Berlin. That was in 1999. In between, I spend one and a half years in New York.

Anna-Lena: How did you get around to do art?

Ulrich: It was actually because of my older brother, who studied fine arts back then. Of course, I didn't want to do the same as him, but I envied him for all the travels. So I thought: 'Then I will become a diplomat.'

Anna-Lena: Plan B.

Ulrich: Exactly. I studied politics and law for about one year, still observing my brother's great life. And then I decided to study fine arts, too. I think I had a weird imagination of being a diplomat. In fact, right now my life is exactly as I had imagined the life of a diplomat. With each journey one gets an exciting profile of different societies.

Anna-Lena: Did you directly start to build installations and sculptures?

Ulrich: No, I started with giant drawings that I, similar to a labyrinth, placed and stretched into rooms. I wouldn't include them into my portfolio anymore. But they still exist, in my grandmother's garret. Later on, I worked with the term 'Extension of Drawing' - that is, installations dominated by the shape of lines.

Anna-Lena: Do you still remember your first exhibition?

Ulrich: I had my first group exhibition in the age of 16, together with Sven Kroner and Jürgen Heinert, at the Social Democratic Party in the Allgäu. My first solo show took place at the Kevin Kavanagh Gallery in Dublin - it was really chaotic, because I have been re-organizing the hanging several times. The gallerist threw his hands up in horror. But eventually it was a great show and I was proud as punch.

Anna-Lena: How did your connection to Dublin come up?

Ulrich: It was pure coincidence. I had a contact in New York, who invited me and other DAAD scholars to join a group show in Ireland. This led to the solo show and I have been faithful since then. The Irish people are an extremely heartily nation.

Anna-Lena: How is your working routine? Do you work in the night?

Ulrich: No, not at all. (laughs) I don't want to go into retirement when I am 60, but rather continue working for a long time. My working routine mainly consists of me swaying things all the time. I pick up material, build and dismantle, clean up. A lot of works emerge by coincidence. At one point I have an idea and then I start with the details.

Anna-Lena: So, your artworks are often subject to coincidence, rather than a plan?

Ulrich: Exactly. Usually I see something that interests me...

Anna-Lena: ...such as?

Ulrich: For instance the sunlight shining through a window on a summer day, passing a flower pot that stands on the window board. This is an amazing spectacle on the wall. One feels the light, the energy and the movement of the plant. Then I think of possibilities to simulate this situation. I assemble a mirror, a bit of sticky tape, a couple of tree knobs in the front; a ventilator to create movement and finally some light. Then the reflection is simulated on the wall. This is how my installation 'Fenster' emerged. I also made different versions: November in Berlin, spring in Basel, summer in Greek - and each time there are different leaves and knobs.

Anna-Lena: It is a very aspiring and longing work.

Ulrich: Well, this is how one feels sometimes. (laughs) Basically, it is a simple way to fulfill one's dreams and to treat rooms differently, with a new angle. Like a catalyzer for dreams, a trigger.

Anna-Lena: Is this work also about security?

Ulrich: Somehow it is, because one is inside. Maybe it is comparable to watching a movie, where one can get lost in another world, but on the other hand, one is still in the present. You know, I understand that one might have to be sad, in order to achieve a certain depth in art. But I personally think it is very important to be happy in life. (laughs)

Anna-Lena: That is a very untypical statement from an artist. Are you a happy person?

Ulrich: Yes, pretty much. But when I am concentratively working towards an exhibition, then I do have those moments where I don't feel good at all. Sometimes it needs this energy to stay focused, to not capitulate.

Anna-Lena: You regularly invite your friends to your studio and ask them to tell you their opinion about your unfinished works. Doesn't this sometimes harm you?

Ulrich: It is important to ask a lot them. As much as I want my work to catalyse the thoughts of others, I think it is legitimate to mirror a collection of other peoples' thoughts.

Anna-Lena: Are your artworks romantic?

Ulrich: These moods are certainly beset with romanticism. That is why I prefer to keep the shapes more plain and strict - like a counterpole. I actually like the term 'romantic', it is just not very cool. One easily becomes vulnerable. But I don't really care about that. I really fancy the term 'Conceptual Romanticism'. (laughs)

Anna-Lena: Wouldn't that be a perfect title for a manifesto?

Ulrich: It is a great term, but someone already wrote a book about it.

Anna-Lena: Why do you make the birdcage reappear so frequently?

Ulrich: I like these open-closed rooms. Initially, a cage is a closed space. But I usually keep the doors

open, such as in my installation 'Nine Clouds in a Cage'. There is a cosmos in the cage that still reacts to the external cosmos - to movement, heat or light. I don't want to emphasize the state of being trapped, but rather highlight the cage as being a shelter. I am interested in the interactive moment.

Anna-Lena: You always integrate each object that is necessary to realise your works: A projector becomes the protagonist, a lamp is placed on a plinth in the middle of the room...

Ulrich: Yes, that is true. In one of my newest installations an image projector lights a hamster wheel. I like the flicker effect - it reminds me of a super 8 film. I think the title will be 'Film', too.

Anna-Lena: And the wheel keeps on spinning?

Ulrich: Yes, about 20 minutes.

Anna-Lena: And then the galerist has to nudge it over and over?

Ulrich: No (laughs), I haven't decided yet. I might install a small engine on the top.

Anna-Lena: The technique of movement also plays a dominant role in your work 'Radion', with the record player and the glass bowl...

Ulrich: ...yes, I should actually give this piece some oil. It will be exhibited at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in the group show 'Berlin Status I'.

Anna-Lena: Do you already know the title for your solo exhibition at Galerie Opdahl?

Ulrich: Yes, well...I actually wanted to ask for your opinion on that one...

www.ulrich-vogl.de

Interview & Photos: Anna-Lena Werner

Ulrich Vogl - peindre d'abord une cage

27th of April 2012 – 16th of June 2012

Opening: Friday, 27th of April, 18-21h

Galerie Opdahl Berlin

Lindenstrasse 35

10969 Berlin

Opening Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11-18h