

Speech on occasion of the Kunstraum 28130 exhibition on 25th February 2005

Written by Dr. Adelheid Komenda, art historian

Karin Kutsch began to examine and interpret the theories of Josef Albers, Max Bill, Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus parallel to her studies of architecture, with a focus on design, in Aachen. She worked as a professional architect in Cologne and Düsseldorf for a number of years, before fully applying herself to the fine arts in 1997/1998. During this period, her interest in the works of Agnes Martin and Blinky Palermo became a deciding factor in her career. Since 1998, Karin Kutsch has taken part in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Cologne, London and elsewhere.

I wish to pose one important question straight away: How can one lend form to the individual value of colour and the autonomy of surface without alienating or confining this form? Or: How can one express emptiness and silence, how can one depict nothingness; how is it possible to say, in a memorable and direct way, that one wishes to say "nothing"? (The effect of the work is based purely on the interplay of form, colour and the space around it?)

The formal significance of the images is confined by the basic element of the square, this foundation is a sober reduction to mathematics - and forms the basis for an unencumbered approach to the materials and space.

The ground to which the works are applied is primarily canvas. These canvasses receive their final pigment and painted density through the application of various monochrome layers of colour in an often time-consuming process. It is particularly important that the various pigments used remain homogeneous. Thus, the interplay of the colours can be shown in multifaceted variations using the basic shape of the square. By eschewing brushwork, the colours can be applied in a smooth, flat area in which the traces of their application remain almost entirely unseen. Karin Kutsch's main interest lies in the personal, expressive values of colour. According to the intensity of the colours or their application, the various layers of pigment permeate one another, change and display their transparency (as in the case of the oiled papers).

This leads the monochrome surface to appear not as a termination or seal, but as something merged with the ground to which it is applied. This ground appears porous, seeping through the painted surface to seek contact with the surrounding

space and the viewer. The visible material characteristics of the ground play an important role, a correspondence which is emphasised by the partially visible edges of the canvas and some unfinished parts of the coloured surfaces.

Karin Kutsch varies the form of the square. Sometimes it is doubled, sometimes tripled, and sometimes appears alone in varying sizes. In these multiple piece works, the colours are able to influence each other, creating a feeling of closure and increased directional neutrality. However, breaking the form into several distinct pieces - and thus creating concurrency, variety and new connections - also becomes possible and significant, especially in consideration of the work's relationship with its environment. The artist constantly strives for a balanced composition.

The space in which the works are exhibited is decisive for their effect - the squares must be placed at substantial intervals to one another, and require a large space in order to display their full effect and intensity, created through a coupling of form, colour and size. The way the paintings are hung, and therefore their cooperation with the space around them, forms a further important component in their pictorial effect within the environment. The various formats and colours create a rhythm, and thus counteract the static quality of their basic form. This results in a changeable tension between the works and the interiors in which they are displayed, in which these are redefined. The expression of this interplay between individual work and series is one of the artist's central proposals. The image is not understood as a mere medium, carrier of a message, but always coincides with this function and thus gains the status of an unknown object with a sense of autonomous reality.

The works represent an idealised structure, through which the artist becomes an ascetic, servant of a stern, impersonal and puritanical order.

The lack of any concrete means of understanding the works allows for any number of interpretations, or none at all, and holds up a mirror to the viewer. Umberto Eco coined the term "offenes Kunstwerk" (the open work) to describe this characteristic.