

»Correspondences« | Exhibition at Hattingen Municipal Museum, September 2021Thomas Koch – in dialog with Marie-France Goerens | Alex Klein | Karl Kriebel | Tonneke Sengers | Guido Zehetbauer-Salzer

Tonneke Sengers

DECLENSION OF ILLUSION

Rectangles, triangles, rhomboids, parallelograms. Everything reverts to the square. In Tonneke Sengers' language, declension is prescribed by a few basic geometric elements and shapes in a few clear colors – for the most part reduced to black and white – positioned in unambiguous matrices and geometric systems to become ambiguous constellations and three-dimensional effects. The connection to architecture is self-evident, the game with the concept of three-dimensionality is the basis for her serial works. The variety of possibilities is just as surprising as the dexterity with which the eye is misled. Tonneke Sengers challenges our perception. Everything is an illusion, because there is no spatial consolidation and no layering of elements and shapes. Constructed space, milled from aluminum and applied over layers of paint. It is our perception that creates the space. Surfaces are set in motion. Flip images, optical illusions. Is this three-dimensional space after all? Is the object truly embedded in the surface?

Yes and no. The extent to which distance and space become an artistic element in their own right only becomes clear when the observer changes position. That is because space is a part of the object, Tonneke Sengers literally captures space with her frames and matrices: Her works interact with space by means of their distance from the wall, leading the observer's gaze astray. The shadow is the artistic element, it reinforces the impression of three dimensionality, the game with the optical effects formed by the contrast between light and dark, between illusion and reality. Where does the object end and the wall begin?

The ostensibly simple structure and the clarity of the systems in her series are surprising, not merely because of the sheer number of variants, but also the multiplicity of their ascribed interpretations. Perception disabuses anyone believing that knowledge of the principle will make it possible to decipher the work.

The first encounter catches the system of the series, the eye grasps the whole, reads the apparent regularity in the works. A closer inspection reveals the aberrations in the system, such as the DANCING CUBES: While one cube tucks in behind another, another sits on top of its neighbor. Only to assume yet another position in a further variant of the constellation. The next illusion is to be found in the black sides of the cubes that determine the interpretation. Do the six surfaces have different shapes? What initially appeared to be a strictly geometric arrangement now seems to be arbitrarily jumbled up. The eye seeks a reference point in this game of illusion and three-dimensionality, while the cubes alter the spatial depth, turning their surfaces inwards. What had just been on the outside has now become the reference surface of an interior corner situation. Then the eye discovers the star in the middle of the work that reveals the exact positioning of the elements – and calms the gaze once more. In a space that is non-existent in its dimensionality. Everything is an illusion.

in: Exhib-cat "Correspondences – Exhibition at Hattingen Municipal Museum"; publisher Stadt Hattingen/Municipal Museum; 2021; p. 50-52