

A Good Idea

Once more Concept Art and Minimal Art in the Rhineland:

The exhibition >>One More<< at the Thomas Rehbein Gallery, Cologne

"It`s quite difficult to mess up a good idea," the American artist Sol LeWitt determined in 1969 in his "Sentences on Conceptual Art."

In fact the first generation of conceptual artists in the 60s and 70s circulated a lot of good and still virulent ideas, dealing with the democratization of institutions of art, the critics of the market and the challenge of aesthetic conventions. Catalogues came to have equal status with exhibitions; artistic ideas needn't necessarily be physically realised to be considered art; the making of art - similar to manufacture in other fields - often was passed on to others.

Scarcely any region had accepted with as great enthusiasm the pioneering innovations of Conceptual Art - and Minimalism which occurred about at the same time - more than the Rhineland.

Since 1967/68 the Düsseldorf gallery owner Konrad Fischer, who appeared earlier as artist under the name Konrad Lueg, regularly exhibited LeWitt and his New York colleagues Carl Andre and Robert Ryman and had successfully placed their work in private collections and museums. In 1971 the conceptual artist Robert Barry cleared out the room of the Paul Maenz Gallery in Cologne and declared it - together with the philosopher Herbert Marcuse - a place "where we can go and be free to give some thought to what we are going to do."

Conceptual and Minimal Art were also regarded economically as not a bad idea. In spite of or just because of their critical ambitions and their rough aesthetic, they developed Blue-chip-artists: Andre, Barry, LeWitt and Ryman should be numbered among them. On the occasion of the death of LeWitt in April 2007 a group show, organized by the artist Dove Bradshaw, became a posthumous homage to this pioneer of conceptual art. This version of the project "One More" now presented at Thomas Rehbein, assembles more than a dozen protagonists of several generations, who have been connected for a long time, not only because of artistic concerns but also because of private and even familial relationships. Therefore this presentation of (a range) of very different (kinds of) work represents last but not least the "familiar," which obviously characterized- following the stories of its actors - the cultural activities in the early years: differences not excluded.

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