

Heimo Zobernig

On KUB's first floor 26 shelving units are arranged in a right-angled grid. The layout, reflecting the ceiling structure of Zumthor's architecture, is chronological, beginning with shelving from the early 1990s. They lean against the wall. In this group of work Heimo Zobernig addresses questions of measurement, space, function, and value. The shelving is made of particleboard and MDF, whilst recent work has begun integrating readymade elements. A group of Ikea's "Billy" series of shelving units have been reconstructed as minimalist objects, for which Zobernig developed a rhythmic progression of components, taking the form of interleaving shelves that create additional compartments. Two round shelving units harbor mannequins at their centers, whilst the backs of others display mirrors. The choice of materials is as crucial as their simplicity and formal reduction. Both their use value as shelving and formal values as objects are emphasized. The layout of the installation at KUB is reminiscent of the silent, early Chinese terracotta army from the imperial necropolis. The floor concludes with what is also the motif for the exhibition's poster, a mobile wall somewhat offset from the grid that has been painted white. The sculpture is typical of Zobernig's conceptual approach to work, here concerning itself with the conditions and provisions of display. Similar screens frequently function as a neutral background when sculptures are being photographed.

The second floor is determined by a space within a space. Black duvetyne curtains are suspended from aluminum supports. Visitors are invited to walk round the resulting monumental structure and enter its interior from the side facing the lake, where they are confronted by a stage-like void. In order for the cross-beams to be mounted at the appropriate height, two rows of the ceiling's glazed paneling were removed, enabling an insight into the ceiling construction of Zumthor's building. Zobernig's black curtained space has its origins in a 2009 installation at Centre Pompidou. The same elements were installed as a labyrinth in Paris, providing a flexible setting for exhibitions, performances, and lectures. In Bregenz it has been transformed into a consolidator of floor space, opening up a large rectangular space dominated by black. The curtain not only confronts notions of the theater, stage, and venue, but also questions of concealment and disclosure, as well as ones of materiality. In addition it also echoes the black wall installed in the square located in front of KUB. A white bench on the second floor is a sculptural object that may be used, as it already was in the pavilion at the Venice Biennale.

A reconstruction of the ceiling installation from the Austrian Pavilion in Venice is located on the third floor, their dimensions identical. A few meters have been cropped from the one-to one copy, as the two floor plans do not correspond exactly. Nevertheless the structure of the Venetian spaces remains easily recognizable in the overhead sculpture, which has also necessitated the removal of a large area of the ceiling's glazed panels. In the pavilion in Venice, constructed by Josef Hoffmann, two spaces with descending stairs replicate each other to the left and right of the portal,

pillars through the center separating them. Zobernig's intervention focused on creating a balance between the ceiling height and floor level. Voids identify the original positions of the pillars in the reconstruction at KUB, adhesive foil coated cardboard, the material used at the Kunsthaus, creates a lightweight system that has enabled the ceiling to be lowered via extensions to the threaded rods already provided by Zumthor.

A bronze sculpture, located in the same space, was originally envisaged for the biennale in Venice, but ultimately did not go on display there at Zobernig's request. In Bregenz it is receiving its public debut. The viewer is confronted by an assemblage of mannequin components, the position of the legs, arms, and the angle of the head adjusted to create a *contrapposto*. The figure, its hands originally on its hips, now raises its arms in front of its torso, its inward turned hands grasping empty space, according to Zobernig. The face is a latex cast of Zobernig's own face. Cracks, fissures, gunshot residue, and smaller holes evoke injury and torture. Nails penetrate the body, small tubes are inserted into it. From the chest upwards, it has been forced into a corset of prominent channels, elements originating from the casting process. Channels and tubes are used to inject or ventilate the casting core. Scratching, scoring, and fissuring as well as the characteristic whitish surface are all results of the casting process, which would then normally be removed during post-processing. Zobernig however eschews any sanding, finishing, or polishing. The figure retains the traces of its making, becoming a document of its own production. Nevertheless the pose and all the apparatus provide it with great expressivity, some of its features being reminiscent of Anton Hanak's famous sculpture *Der letzte Mensch* (1917-1924) and Georg Kolbe's *Morgen* (1925), whilst others are rather more evocative of a broken martyr or a post-apocalyptic android – a masterpiece of Austrian art history.

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