

*Reflections on Space Garden*

Written by Katja Strunz, Berlin 10.11.2017

In his essay *Gegenkörper* (Counter Body), philosopher Bjung Chul Han (Professor at the University of Arts, Berlin) reflects on a poem by the Austrian novelist Peter Handke: “the slight pressure you need to open an old iron door makes you happy.” He suggests that while you need to lean against an old door to open it, the electric door does not stand against the human body. And within digital structures more broadly, resistance—the resistance of an object, and even more the object itself—gets lost.

When I first saw Markus Schaller's sculptures, what caught my eye is the way he relies on the physics of objects. I found this “counter body” in his sculptures that has fascinated me since his earliest work. He finds a way to integrate the world's gravity and the heaviness of the terrestrial structure in his work, which explains why he shoulders heavy metal and prefers pure materials. “Perhaps it derives from his desire to work with a material that offers him resistance,” the art historian Wieland Schmied speculates.

Nowadays, in our time, the body and the objects disappear. The world is more and more represented through media. It might be a central aim of Markus Schaller to resist this process and therefore to create materializations and embodiments. Following Giorgio Agamben, the contemporary is part of both our time and a different time. The contradictory of the contemporary is its untimeliness.

When I entered the old iron door to Markus Schaller's studio, located in an early industrial area in Berlin, I discovered several quirky huge machines that have been used for metal fabrication in past times – a forge and a fire place, with several hammers are hanging on the wall.

Markus Schaller is working on a new series of works in aluminum. By pressing precise geometrical form patterns into a two-dimensional aluminum plate, a three-dimensional plasticity unfolds as an interaction of pressure and resistance. I wonder if these patterns are shaped into the aluminum or lifted out of it. Within the bright light that falls through the large studio windows, these universal astronomic structures originally mapped by Kepler appear as a revelation of an inner structure – like a higher resolution of an inner architecture, like a macroscopic excitement.

And, at the same time, the outer spatial surrounding is reflected on the shiny aluminum screen. When I move in front of the work, light and space interfuse. The optical impression of these works is not just repetitive; it is a lively process, a projective expanse of internal and external patterns.