

## Sculpture in the Future Tense

By Friedrich Meschede

The first artwork I ever saw by Johannes Wald was a text which describes a sculpture made of steel, *ekphrasis*, from the year 2008, other text pieces are about the idea of modelling a sculpture from a lump of clay, or from a block of granite.

Unusual, I thought, what kind of a sculptor refrains from making the pieces, if he can describe them so accurately. And yet this very sculpture was indeed in front of me, even in two ways: as a text on a sheet of paper in a frame. And as an illusion. The fine impressions of each letter on the paper made me realize that the text was set in old-fashioned metal type; I found myself imagining the weight of the type, exhibiting both a contradiction to the heaviness of the described sculpture, but also a contrast to the intangibility of writing with a computer today. So, I am standing in front of a relief, and while reading, I enter the realm of the imagination. The appearance of a sculpture, which I cannot see, of which I do not know whether the given description is an idealized version, appears before my mind's eye.

Here was a new reiteration of the ancient Pygmalion theme, the shyness and longing of the sculptor from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. One is confronted with the endeavour of an artist to breathe more life into his work than the physical implementation allows. "Gliederpuppe (traurig)" *Mannequin (sad)* from the year 2010 would be another example. Underneath a sheet of cloth, the limbs of a doll are visible, perhaps the parenthesized emotional state hinted at in the title forbids looking under the cloth. In its absence, the figure remains present. This cites a central theme of Johannes Wald's, he is a sculptor who focuses on the contradiction of creating something physical that seeks to evade embodiment on a content-related level.

There are a number of lost pieces, stolen artwork, destroyed sculptures and other versions of vacancy, which have also written art history as "blind spots", but at least they were there at one point. Johannes Wald's "Verlorene Form (*five attempts to give shape to a dim feeling*)" *Wasted Mould (five attempts to give shape to a dim feeling)*, evokes a sense of this blankness as well as the bust series *Untitled (studying the greeks grace)*. Or even more so, the *Mobile*, which has nothing at all hanging at the ends of its cords.

The artistic work of Johannes Wald seeks this void in the future, his sculptural aims take shape in forms that express a referential character. There is the piece "pedestal for a muse (outdoor version)", designed for the Skulpturenpark Köln, here a fur is laid on a boulder, accentuating its curved shape, suggesting the absence of a figure resting upon it, which is also supposed to be a muse, thus the embodiment of the inspiration to create something that is actually also already there. A doubled absence in light of a sculpture that asserts itself with its whole volume so much.

For Johannes Wald, seeking sculpture revolves around the production of objects that conceal something. This finds its expression in the veiling of space, but it is above all a withholding of forms, which will probably never take on a concrete shape because that would be too concrete.

Johannes Wald renounces the constraints of a sculptural tradition, which has been justified solely by material and its existence. He narrates without dramaturgy, shapes without solidification and evokes notions of space, which find their expression in the inclusion of both the presence of a creation, as well as the imaginary, which lies beyond it. This is already inherent in earlier pieces, such as the bronze "salute to an undone sculpture" from the year 2007. It can be considered the sum of this concept, although it stands at the beginning of his oeuvre: a bronze sculpture in the archaic shape of an ancient cannon tube, it seems as if it had been melted down for the sake of all material existent, but with reference to the title also only the raw material, from which a future sculpture - honoured by the present form - might arise, if it were to be melted down again. Johannes Wald's artistic thought creates sculpture in the future tense.