

KARSTEN FÖDINGER

Graue Energie

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The tools, materials, and manual skills of the construction site have enabled the German artist Karsten Födinger to imagine a genre of sculpture that springs, like that of some of his contemporaries, from a passion for the art of construction. This passion has enabled a radical transformation of contemporary artistic creative processes since the 1960s.

As an artist, Födinger deals with the concepts of the strength of materials and the statics of structures and uses them to create devices capable of measuring the passage of time, recording the intensity of energy, and countering the precarious nature of equilibrium. Gravity is the invisible force that brings the materials he has selected crashing to the ground and generates their form, traversing his plinths, his pillars and his wedges made of reinforced concrete, steel, and wood. In order to resist that force, all the sculptural members are combined in figures with powerful lines that, in their multiplication and reinforcement, announce the urgent need to react to the imminence of catastrophe.

The investigation of the statics of structures must be seen against the background of the discovery of the fragility of the very structure that contains all those erected by humanity: Earth. Födinger's sculptures express, with power, discretion, and a disenchanted gaze, the approach of an end accelerated by the unchecked exploitation of the resources of the earth, itself a substance that makes an appearance alongside the other materials of his artistic production, plaster, concrete and wood.

Each reflection on statics, equilibrium, the joints between members, or the nature of materials is aimed at revealing the essentials of sculpture, in order to express the physical labour of removing material with blows of a hammer, of striking a concrete formwork by hand, of flinging plaster with a trowel, of joining the members of trestles with pincers and wrenches, or of pressing earth. Födinger's works, beneath the guise of tests in a scientific laboratory and installations on a construction site, conceal a Hellenic essence of a universal nature.

Exhibition produced by ARCHIZOOM and LTH3 (Theory and History of Architecture Laboratory 3, Institute of Architecture EPFL)

Curators: Roberto Gargiani and Anna Rosellini

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