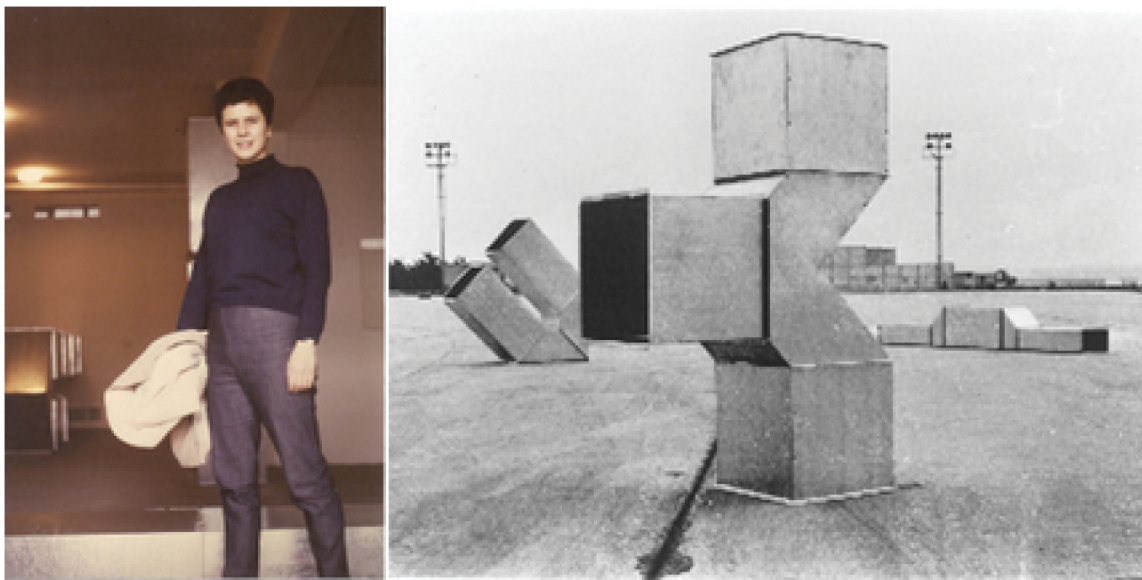


ARTFORUM

INTERVIEWS

STEFAN KALMÁR

June 19, 2010 • Stefan Kalmár talks about Charlotte Posenenske



Left: Charlotte Posenenske at the Kleine Galerie in Schwenningen, Germany, 1967. Right: **Charlotte Posenenske, Vierkantrohre Serie D (Square Tubes Series D), 1967**, Frankfurt airport, 1967. (Photo: Burkhard Brunn)

Stefan Kalmár is the director and curator of Artists Space. Below, he discusses Charlotte Posenenske's withdrawal from the art world in 1968 as well as her importance to Minimalism and relational aesthetics. The first institutional exhibition in the United States devoted to Posenenske's work opens at Artists Space on June 19.

CHARLOTTE POSENENSKE reminds me of Marc Camille Chaimowicz, whose first US exhibition, held at Artists Space last September, marked the beginning of my tenure in New York. Artists Space will always try to highlight artists who have been historically marginalized—not emerging but reemerging artists who destabilize the comfort zone of recent art history. Posenenske, as a prominent figure in European Minimalism, is a striking example.

Through her travels to New York in the 1960s and her exhibitions at Konrad Fischer and Paul Maenz, she was fully aware of American Minimalism, yet she developed a unique language that challenged it. Her work has yet to receive widespread acknowledgment. So far there have only been two posthumous exhibitions in the United States: at MoMA, as part of “In & Out of Amsterdam” in 2009, and a solo show at Peter Freeman in 2008.

Our exhibition will include Posenenske's *Vierkantrohre Serie D* [Square Tubes Series D] from 1967. These fabricated works look like air conditioning shafts; they could easily be mistaken for readymades, which of course they are not. Posenenske's production process is crucial to understanding her approach. As with most of her work, the tubes were industrially manufactured in unlimited editions and sold at cost. No surplus value was added—a killer for the market. Posenenske wanted the curator or dealer to construct his or her own installation of the tubes for each exhibition. This is especially germane if you consider that in 1968 she decided to stop making art altogether and enrolled herself in the sociology department at Frankfurt University, studying assembly line production. I am particularly interested in this transition. Early on she recognized the limitations of art, and shifted her focus to sociology. Her work is all the more compelling in light of the discursive aspects of “the relational” and the recent critical discussions around this.

While working on our show, it became important to also ask why her work has never received broad attention within the United States. Why does her art still exist only on the margins of art history? To highlight the participatory dimension of Posenenske's work, every two weeks we will invite a different artist to change the *Square Tubes*—Ei Arakawa and Rirkrit Tiravanija have been invited, and a third is yet to be confirmed. Three generations will respond or pay homage to Posenenske's notion of participation. This is the unique aspect of our exhibition, distinguishing it from recent exhibitions in Europe (at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris and at the Haus Konstruktiv in Zurich).

Along with the tubes, we will also present Posenenske's academic thesis, *Time Given and the Value of Work*, which she wrote with Burkhard Brunn (whom she later married). This will be exhibited for the first time. Our show has been developed in relationship with and through the extensive support of Dr. Brunn, who has administered the estate since 1985 and who also deserves all the thanks for keeping Posenenske's work in the limelight.

It is important to understand that Posenenske never denounced her art practice. She realized that sooner or later she would need to address the limitations inherent within artworks, and take up the notion of work itself, by both studying sociology and lending her voice to the labor movement. I think it is exactly this antiromantic position that has made Posenenske's art so interesting, poignant, and challenging over the past forty years.

— *As told to Piper Marshall*