

Anne Krauter on Charlotte Posenenske  
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R E V I E W S

## Frankfurt

**Charlotte Posenenske**  
Galerie Grässlin-Ehrhardt

Charlotte Posenenske's square corrugated cardboard objects are so relevant to contemporary concerns that it is with some surprise that one discovers they were created in 1968. Consisting of large individual elements stacked in rows, these pieces achieve spatial and architectural effects that are particularly evocative, their succinct materials and formal clarity striking a chord with current esthetic issues. Similar to air ducts and other building components, their forms appear familiar to our eyes and thereby change the everyday object into artifact. Each element is as ephemeral as the fragile cardboard: a reduced formal vocabulary derives from a square network of pipes, matching joints, and adjustable white plastic knobs that allow for an infinite number of configurations. The squares may be stacked like poles along the walls, arranged at right angles to create corners, or laid out on the floor to traverse a room like ramps.

Seven of these possibilities were played out in the course of seven days for this exhibition. In these daily chang-

ing exhibitions, Posenenske's various concepts of the object's use could be recognized by the viewer, who was drawn into the creative act by imagining the multiple combinatory possibilities. Despite their esthetic proximity to contemporary sculpture, Posenenske's ideas on making art universally available are firmly entrenched in the '60s, especially in that generation's desire to democratize the artistic process. Since individual components of her objects could serve as prototypes for mass production and are even serially fabricated in cheap material, they have lost the status of the traditional gallery object and make one think of industrial by-products. Their lack of conformity with the traditional art categories becomes doubly irritating to the viewer, who is prevented from seeing them all at once because of their enormous scale. The viewer is also mistrustful of the extreme impermanence of the material. His or her sensibility is thus heightened in a particularly powerful and highly subtle manner.

Although Posenenske's closeness to Minimal art cannot be denied, it is difficult to schematize her work. Like so much that is once again on view from the '60s, her art appears both unique and yet somehow familiar. The intervening years have contributed to a better understanding of what once was considered deviant. Information on this period, however, is more difficult to come by than an appreciation of it. Posenenske, who died in 1985, left hardly any traces, which should not by any means be taken as an indication of

the quality of her work. A former student of Willi Baumeister, Posenenske stopped painting in 1962 and turned to making three-dimensional objects. These soon left the realm of sculpture and entered into the architectonic and social context. Among the last works that she created before halting her artistic activity, the large cubes of the "DW" series, 1968, have justifiably rekindled interest. This has mostly occurred for esthetic reasons, by virtue of their reductive appearance and contextual function.

At the age of 40 Posenenske began to study sociology and subsequently worked on the analysis of texts, a development that evolved out of concerns already expressed in her objects. Through this process she arrived at the necessary conclusion that led her to stop making art, having recognized that "it is difficult for me to reconcile myself with the fact that art adds nothing to the solution of urgent societal problems."

—ANNE KRAUTER

Translated from the German by Cornelia Lauf.