

Invitation to Tea Dance: 6 Kontrapunkte für 22 Ringe (6 Counterpoints for 22 Rings)

An Installation by Susanne Rottenbacher in the Teapot gallery, Cologne.

Gazing into the gallery from the street, we see the entire room engaged in a play of light and color, whose protagonists, transparent plastic rings on cables and steel cable, come together to form an elaborate, total installation. Upon entering the gallery space, we embark on a tour that leads us along various stages through this play.

Having gained recognition for light boxes that combine painting, light, and time, Susanne Rottenbacher has been designing transparent rings of light as individual sculptures for exterior and interior spaces for the last two years. In her newest work, Rottenbacher combines different quantities of rings of various formats into ensembles. These works occupy the space to the ceiling, and are intended to be viewed as independent, self-contained sculptural installations. 6 Kontrapunkte für 22 Ringe (6 Counterpoints for 22 Rings) consists of six ensembles that function as the diverse stations on this tour of the gallery space.

Rottenbacher works with two types of rings. The majority are transparent plastic forms inside of which there are fine webs of wires fitted at regular intervals with small, colorful LED lights. The exteriors of these forms are enhanced with painted stripes of various color intensities, thicknesses, and densities. These dynamic compositions of painterly line formations meet the strict linear arrangement of the wire networks. The regularity of the arrangement of colorful points of light further accentuates the works, creating a dialogical interplay that characteristically structures the ring forms and simultaneously illuminates the surroundings in a way that is as invasive as it is diffuse.

The second, less common type of ring is semitransparent; it has a milky exterior and the colorful stripes are not painted but printed two-dimensionally. While the light can only break through in fragments, the physicality of the plastic ring is much more clearly perceivable. This type appears much less open to its surroundings; it casts less light on them, and remains more concentrated on itself and its own design. Within the ensembles, they take on a mediating role as optical nuances.

In their form and design, Rottenbacher's rings of light appear to be open in multiple senses. They contain their surroundings in their centers. In the interiors of their plastic forms, they enclose space, yet, through the interplay of lines and light, allow it to be seen outside to a

greater or lesser degree, according to external conditions. Freely suspended and, through their presentation in groups, interrelated as fixed ensembles, they confront the viewer as figures whose overall appearances extend into space, each in its own arrangement, dimensions, and concentration. As forms of light and color, they illuminate the entire gallery space and ultimately occupy it in relation to the surrounding light, which is constantly changing according to the rhythm of the time of day.

The installation allows the viewer to walk through the composition, which becomes perceivable as a total composition through a dynamic variation of density and looseness. The predetermined path leads through the gallery space as in a playing area, leading not only through this game, but rather always deeper into it. In entering and viewing the installation, the viewer can play a crucial role in designing the game of rings in ever new variations of possible relations, and, above and beyond that, the viewer can influence the tempo and rhythm of the composition. An important, additional source of support in this game comes from a mirror as tall as the space, which effectively contributes to multiplying the impressions.

A viewer susceptible to synesthesia would experience this installation as a musical composition cum visual adventure. The rhythmic interplay of the various ensembles makes it possible to experience a kind of orchestration of space. A composition is performed to create a harmony of light, form, time, and motion, with a score that is open to participation from the viewer.

Such a grand performance reaches its finale in the second room of the gallery, where a number of rings are stacked on the floor. Yet this does not only add the last note to the composition; the loose collection of rings also announces a possible new beginning. The continuation of the large space-light event is conceivable in many forms and directions. It would be nice to join in, to pick up the rings, set them in motion, create light signs in the space, and to play.

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