

Book number 10

Book nr 10

Scale, quantity, the big and the small, cut in pieces from a daily newspaper. The outside of book number ten is covered by a copy print from a once mailed letter. Inside you find pages with black dots and a diminished picture in the corner. The dots are a blow up from the diminished. If you let your finger run up and down the page you feel the dots with your fingertips and together they form an abstract picture. The page numbers are important. Written by hand they give orientation and make us understand the spatial relationships. The numbers give something familiar and order in an otherwise unfamiliar environment. But what is in between the blow up and the diminished? Where is that that make sense? Where is reality?

Dieter Roth

Book number 10 was written by the artist Dieter Roth. Roth was born in 1930 in Germany by German and Swiss parents and early showed a talent for poetry and drawing.

Dieter aimed to become a poet but, discouraged by his friends, he decided to concentrate on art instead. Roth was, especially during early years, influenced by the constructivist movement. Later he worked with notions such as quantity and the destructive. Roth had a working method he called smearing (to overdo and destroy something). He failed to do what he aimed to and smearing became an escape from perfection. He also worked in series and this is connected to his belief that many outcomes could have a value and be interesting.

Roth was a constant traveller and he lived/ worked in London, Reykjavik, Dusseldorf and Berlin just to mention a few cities. He married and later divorced from Sigurd Bjornsdottir and together they had three children who assisted Roth in his projects. Friends and artists close to Dieter Roth was among others Hangjorg Mayer, Andre Tomkins, Emmet Williams and Robert Filliou.

Maybe the most important works of his are the artist books that he created. The books changed the notion artist book and also contains the essence of his work. Important books are "book" (1958), his diary from 1982 for the biennale in Venice and Mundunculum. In "book" he reaches the furthest with concretism, the diary is seen as a key work among and to understand his books and in Mundunculum he tries to create his own language. During periods of his life he was deeply depressed and attempted suicide once. He died naturally, but too early, at the age of 68 in 1998. His last project was the Schimmel-museum (mould-museum) in Hamburg, which he spent his last ten years working on.

While hiding and escaping from the perfect Roth is changing focus. He focus upon the broken and the falling apart. And it becomes something interesting and wanted. It is about movement. His rotting sculptures move even without his presence. Books are to be "moved" when you turn pages, his Piccadilly series and his self portrait drawing series, where the series themselves becomes a movement, the way he is traveling and the way already finished objects are being remaid/reinforced. But it is also about staying, trying to really figure something out. Like his obsession with the picture alphabet in Mundunculum. For five years working with this, until it in the end comes out chaotic and unclear. He is working with things till they fall apart and they therefore get an other meaning. Which one you will never know from the beginning.

His pictures resembles poetry to me. They consist of pieces (words)(now they have been destroyed by overdoing). And those pieces create something else than what was the thought from the beginning. Words put in an other order than the conventional one (sentences) is nothing as it at the same time, is something else (poetry). And one can try to influence this process by adding or subtracting different elements consciously or unconsciously.

His poetry on the other hand resembles pictures. Pictures with sound. So where is the distinction between picture and poetry? If there is one, does there have to be? Probably not.

References:

Thun, Felicitas (curator), 1998. *Dieter Roth, Gedrucktes Geprestes Gebundes 1949-1979*. Koln: Druckgrafik und Bucker

Mayer, Hangjorg (editor), 2006. *Dieter Roth. The Picadillies*. New York: Thames and Hudson

Dobke, Dirk (curator), 2002. *Dieter Roth- Unique Pieces*. London: Thames and Hudson

www.dieter-roth-foundation.com

www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dieter-Roth

www.artnet.com

chance as a creative force

Serious

T. white

Hungel Im 0.10