

STATEMENT : « Monuments »

I try to make a new kind of monument. A precarious monument. A monument for a limited time. I make monuments for philosophers because they have something to say today. Philosophy can give the courage to think, the pleasure to reflect. I like the strong meaning in philosophical writings and the questions about human existence. I like full-time thinking. I like philosophy, even when I don't understand a third of its reflections. I'm interested in non-moralist, logical, political thinking. I'm interested in ethical questions. That's why I chose philosophers for monuments. But in contrast to the altars which are personal commitments, these monuments are conceived as community commitments. There is something really beautiful in the fact that humans beings have the capacity to think, to reflect, and the ability to make their brains work. Spinoza, Deleuze, Gramsci and Bataille are examples of thinkers who instill confidence in the reflective capacities: they give force to think, they give force to be active. I think that to read their books continues to make sense, to question, to reflect, to keep beauty vital. The monuments are composed of two parts or even more. The « classical-part », a form, reproducing the thinker with his features, head or body. This part of the monument is a statue. And there is the « information-part », a new part in the monument, the material to be consulted : books, video tapes, statements, biographical documents. This « information-part » with its material responds to « why ». The « classical » statue part responds to « who ». The information part of the monument is a physical place, a small construction (like in the kiosk project) open 24 hours, 7 days a week, where one can isolate oneself, sit down, study and get information about the philosopher's work. This part of the monument with the documentation is a proposition to make the philosopher's work accessible to the public : to those who have never been in contact with philosophy, but also to those who are « professionals », specialists, philosophers or amateurs. I want both aspects of the monument to be equally accessible.

I want to make it possible to first be in contact with information, to read about the work, the philosophy, and then afterwards to look at the statue. I want the monument to be diversely accessible. Thus, the monument is not just standing there, but wants to offer the possibility to be informed – about its' meaning and furthermore about the thinking of those philosophers. There is an active part and a passive part. This monument will not intimidate. It does not come from above. It is made through admiration, it comes from below. The monument will not remain there for eternity. The plastic aspect of the monument – cardboard, wood, tape, garbage bag covering, neon lights – shows its' limitation in time and enforces its' precariousness. The form conveys the idea that the monument will disappear. What shall remain are the thoughts and reflections. What will stay is the activity of reflection.

The four monuments are to Spinoza, Deleuze, Gramsci and Bataille. I made the « Spinoza-Monument » in a street of the Red Light district in Amsterdam in 1999; I built the « Deleuze-Monument » in a public housing space, Cité Champfleury Avignon in spring 2000; and I made the « Bataille Monument » in the Friedrich Wöhler Siedlung for the Documenta 11 in Kassel, in 2002.

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