

Folds

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January 2014

For those of us with healthy ears the ability to hear and to identify tones and sounds is a process so ordinary and automatic that we seldom consciously devote our attention to it. We use our sensory organs, trust in their proper functioning and normally accept the results unquestioningly and as a matter of course. In fact we become aware of our complex processes of perception only when some disruption makes its way into them or their limitations become plainly apparent. It is precisely here that the artist Andrea Wolfensberger's work finds its point of departure: she reaches, so to speak, into the interfaces of our sensory organs and subtly questions the automatisms of our perception. In her sculptures tones – spoken words intended for the ear – are visualised for the eye and transposed into a haptically perceptible presence; in this way they are simultaneously rendered tangible and displayed.

Wolfensberger records the sound waves of individual words or sounds with a scientist's attention to detail and translates their lines and curves into three-dimensional forms. Driven by her fascination and the question of what happens when a medial transformation takes place – when words become volumetric figures – Wolfensberger plumbs language's potential for being formed sculpturally. For example, tiny changes emerge when the same words are pronounced repeatedly: none of the sound waves recorded correspond to those preceding or following them. The subtle differentiations which emerge between the different recordings have become increasingly important to the artist's work. On the one hand this is true in terms of sculptural aspects, because subtle and fascinating deviations appear within the pattern of these words. On the other hand, however, thematic concerns have led the artist to her exploration of repetition, which is based on a juxtaposing and reflection upon analogue singularity and digital reproduction. Wolfensberger thus also raises questions that have lost none of their urgency in our contemporary world defined by digital media and technologies – even long after Walter Benjamin's well-known reflections on the 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'. Because at present, it seems possible to renegotiate the terms of the critical debate regarding digitality by means of a kind of nostalgic return to the analogue, bound up with a yearning for authenticity and singularity.

In *Folds*, the coming exhibition at the Galerie Gisèle Linder in Basel, Wolfensberger devotes her attention primarily to sculptural works to be presented on the wall, whose contours – 'folds' – are based on recordings of specific spoken words. Both in her choice of words and of materials the artist plays with 'negative space', with what lies between. In works like *between one and zero* or *between here and there*, the recorded curves of semantically opposed pairs, such as 'yes' and 'no' or 'here' and 'there', collide together, merge into one another and form the sculptural surface. The materials used – mounting card or corrugated cardboard painted white – augment the delicacy of the network of lines

and cause a certain transparency to appear in the sculptures. By using these materials the artist simultaneously enters into the grey area between model and autonomous sculpture and stimulates a critical questioning of the divisions between specific art forms.

With their austere and moving detachment, their shimmering surfaces and their lines and surfaces merging into one another, Andrea Wolfensberger's sculptures speak to the viewer's eye and vividly demonstrate the artist's interest in processes of communication with both the surrounding space and the viewer. It almost seems as though we could hear the spoken words resonating through the swaying forms.

translated by michael wetzel