

## Schirin Kretschmann – True Blue

The clearly outlined area of color comprising *True Blue* might appear at first sight as a functional, industrial floor marking. It does not seem to be an integral part of the exhibition *Loose Control* at the *Montagehalle* of the Braunschweig Academy of Visual Arts. Well-meaning assistants placed pub tables on the colored area ahead of the exhibition opening, and visitors inadvertently stepped on it. *True Blue* is made of fine blue pigment powder mixed with an equal part of plaster and applied with utmost precision onto the blotchy floor along the wall of the exhibition hall, forming a strip of varying width and approximately 20 meters long. Due to the latter's sharp edges, the unpainted wall – together with the pipes, cables and technical equipment, which partially disappear behind an additional white display wall – appears from a distance as an ensemble of various Ready-Mades composed of wall and ceiling configurations: an exhibition within the exhibition, which draws attention to the ephemeral details of the fixtures, infrastructure and openings, now apparently transformed into sculpture-like everyday objects. Moreover, the vulnerability of the pigment layer, only few millimeters thick, has tended to pose a considerable physical challenge to the audience. It manifests itself as an ominous, destructive temptation, a quiet provocation to transgress boundaries which unconsciously creep into perception. It generates the thrill of an open-ended decision as to how to relate to the work, how to test and experience its physical quality.

*True Blue*, like no other work by Schirin Kretschmann, brings together and condenses the artistic strategies informing her oeuvre. Already in *Rewind* from 2013, Kretschmann covered the floor between the works comprising the group exhibition *Der Zweite Blick* at the *Städtische Galerie Nordhorn* with a sugar solution and a red food die, thus binding them together in a space grounded in its own order. At her 2013 solo exhibition *She Came In Through The Bathroom Window* at the art space *Fuhrwerkswaage* in Cologne, she laid out on the floor a large, geometrical form made of shoe polish, the surface of which was as fragile as that of *True Blue* and likewise cautioned visitors against the consequences of a rash movement. As with *True Blue*, the Cologne intervention was also meant to mark the properties of the

exhibition venue, transforming the space itself into a synesthetic and sculptural presence.

There is, however, a key difference, a decisive development, separating *True Blue* from Kretschmann's earlier works, whose materiality was always created for a specific location. By virtue of its restrained form and highly delicate pigment surface, *True Blue* resists an unequivocal categorization as a work of art in two ways. Its functionalist understatement makes it appear applicable to all potential locations in a myriad of configurations. Almost independently of its dimensions, it furthermore appears capable of inducing a transformation of its spatial environment, which takes place both unnoticed and palpably, in the moment in which visitors are faced with their precarious power to intervene into the substance and form of the work as a result of curiosity or carelessness. Certainly, in her earlier work Kretschmann had repeatedly reminded the viewer of the conditions of aesthetic perception and their by no means passive role in the dialogue with her works. *True Blue*, however, confronts them with the direct consequences of their acts and thereby challenges the auratic, protection-seeking character of the artwork.

At the opening of *Loose Control*, Kretschmann's performative intervention *Inside Out* constituted an additional attempt to draw the audience's attention to the marginal elements of the exhibition space, which are usually left out by the selective perception characteristic of a vernissage. She entered the cavity of the wall on the opposite side, whose construction method was identical to that of the wall in front of which the pigment strip of *True Blue* was placed. From various heights in the wall cavity, she used a hammer to remove the nails, screws and wall plugs which had remained from previous exhibitions and were now flowing into the exhibition hall accompanied by a continuous construction site-like background noise. The artist's presence behind the wall was vaguely perceptible – yet in Brian O'Doherty's well-known terms, she consistently remained *outside the white cube*.

*Carsten Probst*