

Dr. Renée Gadsden

## Fun and No Fun

The play's the thing  
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

– *Hamlet*  
Act II, Scene 2

Every game is based on logic and order. Kirsten Borchert, in the *Abstract Grammar* series, has taken apart the apparent logic and order of common games and created autonomous images that no longer imply or provide recreation. By reducing the game playing fields to graphic elements, she creates a New World Order of her own design. We, the viewers, are the pawns in her visual undertaking. Each quadrate is 1,45 x 1,45m, and inside each square Borchert has invented a language based on intuitive rules, logically and systematically applied. The viewer, however, has not mastered this language. Looking at the images one succumbs to a sensation of dreamlike confusion; Borchert wants us to feel as if we have just awakened and realized that everything around us has been shifted off axis.

Bipolarity is a leading theme in the *Abstract Grammar* exhibition. When playing a game, one experiences crass joy or painful loss. One experiences moments of triumph and of shame. In a stadium, these feelings are transferred from the players on the field to the spectators and fans. The stadium situation evokes further bipolarities. There are two fan groups against each other. Additionally, the players, panem et circenses, are not only opponents of each other as teams, they are also the adversaries of the audience. Parallely, the works in the *Abstract Grammar* series seem to be prints, but are not. Each is an original, one of a kind, painting: acrylic on paper. The title of the series also intentionally leads the observer astray. According to Borchert, something that is abstract is a complete fabrication. These works, however, are not abstract, because they are based on actual games. Borchert renders transformation visible, and forces us to take a new standpoint in our relationship to playing.

Large concrete-like blocks, *Formation Block 1*, dominate the center of the exhibition space. Larger than life elements from a child's box of toy building bricks? Or pygmy-size construction parts of stadium block houses? Borchert is fascinated by architecture, and sees it as being a "visualization of the potential that society wishes it had." The spectator is invited to wander through the labyrinth of this structure, confronting these block elements as a momentary expletive, an ambiguous declaration of power and precariousness. "Block 1": the same terminology used at entrances in Auschwitz welcomes you into the soccer stadium in Cottbus. Borchert insists that culture is a learned concept; therefore, the possibility that everything could be different than the way it is being presented haunts her work. What is the recurrent moment? What stays the same, amid distortion and displacement? Borchert is searching for the clear form. She often makes architectural models of her installations and exhibitions, incrementally approaching the form she seeks, going step-by-step through the transformative process.

Kirsten Borchert is a promising young artist, at the start of her creative journey. She herself acknowledges analogies with Absalon, an artist whose work can only speak of youthful potential because of his early death at age 28. Absalon created spaces in a systematic manner, using atypical arrangements and principles of selection and classification to challenge the usual concepts of functionality and usage. Borchert does the same, and brings in her own, poignant themes: the death of fun, the capriciousness of cultural concepts and the pitifully heroic attempt of each individual to win The Game that cannot be won.

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