

The Quadrature of the Moon

By Mikkel Bogh

It can hardly be expected that this will be the first thing one sees when she/he steps through the main entrance of the library. Discreetly hung quite a ways above eye level and at a significant distance from the bookshelves that are, of course, where the visitor is primarily inclined to turn her/his attention, suspended on the wall between the circulation desk and the office landscape situated behind it, the sculpture is situated on the periphery of the visitor's visual field. Light without color of their own - like the walls, the ceiling, the rafters and the bookshelves themselves - it actually coincides with its surroundings, so underplayed that one could eventually be tempted to see its circular forms as 'O's, as visually metaphoric expressions of a downward prospecting for space's point-zero.

A stroll around the library focuses our attention and sharpens our eye for details, primarily concerning details of the books and concerning the items of information that these books contain: exteriorly - by virtue of their forms, sizes, colors, placement and titles and interiorly - through the words, their pictures and their various designs. In this attuned condition, you also become more attentive to the overhanging elements and other special qualities inside the space: you come to notice the skylight window's latticework and the glazing bars in the windows situated high on the side-walls and perhaps you even come to notice the conspicuously frequent occurrence of quadratic and quasi-quadratic fields inside the room, not only in the forms of the books, but also in the window frames and windowpanes, in the tables, the computer monitors, the shelves and the bearing columns that scan the side wings into almost quadratic sections. In such a setting, *The Quadrature of the Moon*, a piece specifically produced for the site, now adorning the uppermost section of the wall behind the circulation desk, emerges distinctly as a simultaneously discreet and intensely prominent intervention into the space.

The site-specific artwork does not merge into the surrounding space, once it finally starts to lay claim to our attention among all the other elements and bits of information inside the room. Quite certainly it is miming: with its light and easy way of playing on the functions and spatialities that are already present here – the square, the container, the box, the shelf, the series, the books' variety, both in terms of size and shape – and by virtue of its way of playing with references to architecture and design, to the house, the building element and the module and to the articles of furniture – themes that most of the library's books are dealing with. However, at the same time, the artwork differentiates itself by not being a bearer of the same kind of information that the books and the computer monitors convey and by not containing the same pragmatic functions as

the architecture. Strongly bound to and nonetheless fantasizing freely about its own surroundings, the piece operates as a tale about the architecture and about the architectonic. It does so through the possibilities that the model, the object and the sculpture provide for generating utopian and visionary space as well as possible and impossible constructions: architectons, models, scenographies and sketches, all unfurled somewhere between the actually existing and the merely possible, between the concrete and the abstract.

The Quadrature of the Moon consists of a series of box-like forms with their bottom-lines situated perfectly flush; this line complies with that of the girder in the openings in the side wings. The box-like forms are mounted directly beneath the cornice that runs all the way around the room in this former locksmith's shop. In this way, the sculpture is situated in continuation of several of the space's predominating articulations. Nonetheless, the sculpture functions as something else and something more than an architectonic and ornamental intervention in the space. As a picture-generative and figurative element, it calls to mind a horizon line, above which the large circular-formed disc hovers like some celestial body. The disc's form recapitulates itself in the circular reliefs that are situated on the sides of each of the boxes. A game is initiated: as the boxes are disseminating the composition, extending themselves out to the sides, skipping and dancing like notes in a row, without center and without any graspable system, the white disc is gathering up the whole again: the theater-moon that is floating over the horizon, without laying any claim to being central or predominating. This is not the mother disc for all the other circles; it is merely focusing the attention and imparting to the site-specific piece, as a totality, a concise and persistent character. With this disc and with the box-like forms' circles in varying sizes, the architectonic space's cubic and rectilinear basis is being challenged.

Aside from the modern ceiling lamps and the spider-web-like window on the opposite end wall, there are virtually no other rounded forms inside this room. For this reason, the circles make their appearance as a reminder of curvature's possibility inside the context of an architectonic tradition and within a way of thinking that bases itself on the straight line, on the square and on the sharp edges. Here, the circle thus represents not only a conception of perfection, but stands - above all - as the picture of a form character that architecture makes use of only very seldom. In this connection, it is worth noticing that "quadrature of the circle" is the classical problem of creating a square with the same area as a given circle: an impossible construction.

There is no privileged place from where *The Quadrature of the Moon* should be contemplated. Of course, the viewer might have her/his favorite vantage point, but the work itself does not dictate where this should be. If anything, the piece gradually transforms the entire room into a place. And it does so not only by virtue of its capacity as a sculpture installation to intervene into, engage with and concomitantly modify the space, but also by virtue of its manner to transform itself, entirely according to where it is viewed from. If you place yourself far away from the work, it takes on the character of the line, the series or the row much more distinctly; if you stand right below it

and look up, on the other hand, it becomes dynamic, with its large leaps and spurts out into the space, as if it were a set of organ pipes or the skyline of a big city.

Sophia Kalkau's poetic minimalistic art opens itself up to many more pathways, associations and stories than any formally reduced minimalism would ever permit. In its very own underplayed way, her art plays with meanings and with pictures which, however, never really attach themselves firmly to it – it is too open and too fundamental for that to happen, in any event. There is, however, one single image that thrusts itself forward with more urgency than any of the others in this sculptural installation, and this is the picture of the moon that is rising up toward the nighttime sky. Or maybe it's the moon that can sometimes be seen quite clearly in broad daylight, as an almost transparent disc on the blue sky. When collated with the rest of its formal and spatial properties, and seen in the light of its intervention into the library's different functions and stories, *The Quadrature of the Moon* can be said to be revolving around the theme of knowledge. Not merely because in its forms, in its spatial expiration, in its combinations, leaps and so on, it is miming the process of searching for knowledge, with which the library's visitors will certainly be familiar. But also because it reminds us of the possibilities of a different kind of knowledge and a different kind of enlightenment than that which has traditionally been rendered visible through the vehicle of daylight and the clear rays of the sun: namely, this far more discreetly and poetically illuminated knowledge conveyed by the moon's rays, during the night, but also during the day and which was previously, and not without reasons, associated with both insanity and the exceptional, dreaming insight. This knowledge is to be found, also right here, inside the labyrinths and mazes of this library of architecture.

Translated by Dan A. Marmorstein