

Ib Geertsen - Mobiles

If you talk about art that moves, about actual movement in art, you are talking about mobiles.

But you cannot talk about mobiles without talking about Ib Geertsen.

A significant part of Ib Geertsen's oeuvre has become synonymous with light, independently balanced sculptures of wire and the like, that float as drawings in the room where they have been hung. Geertsen calls them 'drawings in the air', because this is what they are. He first started making these three-dimensional 'drawings' around 1950. Through the next half century he has developed this unique type of drawing, which has ancestors in both painting and sculpture. But in contrast to traditional sculpture mobiles do not stand on the ground, but they may partly rest on a foundation. Usually they stand in the air, where they are not even standing still, but quivering and moving in tiny gliding movements. The mobile is Ib Geertsen's atmospheric chamber music. For in them he has united and condensed the shapes most commonly used in his nonfigurative painting: the curved or round sequence (at times also the drop), and the broken lines, tied to each other in small nodes or axles. The artistic challenge – for the artist – is to create an asymmetrical shape that works visually and is simultaneously perfectly balanced, so that it revolves around its own axis if you as much as look at it. It is this quiet movement that makes the mobile mindful. It reacts to its surroundings, like to its audience.

It is the supreme task of a work of art to fill the mind of its audience. But in order to do so it must first catch the eye. The special ability of the mobile in this respect can be ascribed to the fact that the experience has a sequence in both time and space. It attracts attention, not only by its restless calm, but also by its particularly vibrant color. In contrast to Ib Geertsen's paintings, the mobiles have only one color to their palette. It is the special task of this color to highlight the non-ambiguity of the shape and sharpen its simplicity. Ib Geertsen's color scheme has not always been as vibrant and harmoniously friendly as it is today. His choice of color is a sign of clarification, a catharsis, as is everything in his art, and black and white have not been on his palette for a long time now; his focus is on the primary colors of the rainbow, especially yellow, orange and red. Those he still uses. For those interested in the condition of sight, color equals visibility. It all comes down to creating something visible, which also comprises order and poetry, in other words, something that both catches the eye and rewards critical attention. That is why Ib Geertsen paints his mobiles and thus makes them small pictorial spaces in intimate movement.

A long and active life has made Ib Geertsen an institution in Danish art. He is one of those who have always attempted, by use of color, to win not just the plane but the entire room. Working from a belief that color makes an esthetical and mental difference for modern man, he has colored schools and hospitals, furniture, interactive sculptures, works in enamel and much else besides, which might stretch artistic effects into daily life. 'Color environments' and the social works of ornamentation have been the special occupation that unites all the others. And it is also here, in the infinite color environment of a space that Ib Geertsen's mobiles belong.

Peter Michael Hornung