TRANSLATION

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If Walls Could Talk: the Brick Sculptures of Per Kirkeby

Per Kirkeby is an internationally acclaimed Danish painter, sculptor and writer. Looking back at the period when he started his career, he described the climate of the late 1960s and early 1970s as a landscape where each figurative gesture was troubled by the iconoclasms of the minimal art movement. In this period, paintings for which he is now well known achieved a delicate balance between iconicity and iconoclasm, populism and minimalism, the figurative and the literal. The architectural sculptures that he then built are as interesting as his paintings but have not received the same attention. In reaction to the articulation of materiality, structure, form and space in the work of artists such as Carl Andre and Donald Judd, Kirkeby's early brick sculptures valued craftsmanship and exposed the figurative connotations of architectural language. While these first brick sculptures were exhibited in a museum setting, since the 1970s he has built architectural sculptures in the form of walls, labyrinths, towers, and donjons in public spaces all over Northern Europe.

In the first part of this paper we critically examine how the artist's brick sculptures confront romanticism with minimal art, ultimately in order to merge both into a grand classicism. Unlike many architectural sculptures produced in the 1970s and later, Kirkeby's brick sculptures question neither the disciplinary boundaries between sculpture and architecture, nor the relevance of specific contexts for artistic practices. We argue that Kirkeby's privileging of a popular romanticism over minimalism, the figurative over the literal, or iconicity over iconoclasm, while always striving towards balance, is the result of the ambition to create, in the same way as monuments express a perception of the meaning of time, an image in which he – and surrounding inhabitants or passers-by – can condense fragments of time and history.

If Walls Could Talk: The Brick Sculpure of Per Kirkeby

Since the 1970s many artists have explored the category of architectural sculpture. Sculptures that resemble architecture or act like buildings have made customary appearances both inside and outside museums, in outdoor public art exhibitions, and on piazza's and roundabouts in public space. The Danish artist Per Kirkeby, among other artists such as Dan Graham, Alice Aycock, Isa Genzken, Thomas Schütte, Ludger Gerdes, Claus Bury, Erwin Heerich and Rachel Whiteread, has contributed to the exploration of this sculptural category. While his first architectural sculptures of the 1960s were exhibited in an indoor museum setting, his brick walls, labyrinths, towers, and donjons were realised for outdoor sculpture festivals (such as at *Skulptur. Projekte* in Münster), sculpture or museum gardens (such as in Middelheim, Antwerp) or for public spaces of cities across Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

In comparison to his painterly work, Kirkeby's brick sculptures have received little attention.[1] This might not surprise, since he first and foremost thinks of himself as a painter and only secondarily as a sculptor, amateur-architect, writer or moviemaker. Deeply influenced by the Fluxus movement, and the ideas of Joseph Beuys and Wolf Vostell in particular, he developed his activity across different artistic media during his training at the experimental art school or Ex-school in Copenhagen. Not unlike his fellow students, upon entering the school in 1963, the aspiring artist experimented with crossovers between painting, graphic art, sculpture, film, literature and performance. Yet an even more defining factor was the encounter, during and after his studies, with minimal art and pop art. At this time, the young artist was exposed to the American debate on medium-specificity – in particular the translation of painting to sculpture and the thin line between objecthood and art. Michael Fried argued in the late 1960s that literalness is a basic characteristic of each sculpture that must be overcome by pictorial and optical means. What should be rendered illusive, according to Fried, "is nothing less than literal-ness itself." [2] The object-art of Donald Judd, however, as Rosalind Krauss put it, excluded "any reference to experiences or ideas beyond the work's brute physical presence."[3] As Mark Linder has recently demonstrated, Fried found that the slick boxes of Judd failed to sublimate in art because they did not succeed in transcending their object-hood and because their spatial qualities essentially belonged to the domain of architecture.[4]

As an intricate reaction to the articulation of materiality, structure, form and space by minimal artists, and Donald Judd in particular, Kirkeby's first brick sculptures were minimalist cubes with

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1   Recent retrospectives of his work at the Tate Gallery in London (2009), in the Bozar in Brussels (2012) and in the Bowdoin College Museum of Art in Brunswick (2013) have focussed primarily on his paintings. Per Kirkeby, Achim Borchardt-Hume, Vicent Todoli, and Richard Shiff. *Per Kirkeby*. (London: Tate, 2009); Per Kirkeby and Siegfried Gohr, *Per Kirkeby and the "forbidden paintings" of Kurt Schwitters: retrospective*. (Brussels: BOZAR, Centre for Fine Arts, 2012); Klauss Ottmann, Dorothy M. Kosinski, and Per Kirkeby, *Per Kirkeby: Paintings and Sculpture*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

2   Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 92.

3   Rosalind Krauss, "Allusion and Illusion in Donald Judd," (1966) in: *Minimalism*, ed. James Meyer (London: Phaidon Press, 2000), 211.

4   Mark Linder, *Nothing Less Than Literal: Architecture After Minimalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004).

improper pictorial affinities. Kirkeby turned to building with bricks, as the language of architecture allowed him to introduce figurative connotations and art historical references. Even though many considered it a taboo in the 1960s, Kirkeby decided to talk about the legacy of Romanticism, and about his admiration for the great romantic German painters such as Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) and Carl Gustav Carus (1789-1869).[5] He engaged in a sort of European version of minimal art, using the new American abstraction while nevertheless engaging with the burden of art history.

Grandad was a Bricklayer, too

Kirkeby built his first brick sculpture in 1965 in Holbergsgade, a basement gallery in Copenhagen. Here, artists associated with the Experimental Art School met and exhibited their work. A direct outcome of his experiments with materials and spatial installations at the Ex-School, it consisted of a rectangular grid and a vertical stack of bricks the latter of which he referred to as a "simple small chimney".[6] This moment in history is remarkable, since only one year later the American artist Carl Andre, later to be widely recognized as one of the key protagonists of American minimal art, mounted a very similar work in the Tibor de Nagy Gallery in New York. For *Equivalents I-VIII* Andre set eight rectangular 'islands' or mounds of different proportions, each made out of two layers of sixty bricks, on the gallery's wooden floor. While Kirkeby has indicated that at the time he made his first brick sculptures he "didn't know about Carl Andre," Andre apparently didn't know about Kirkeby's early work either.[7] Yet the fate of the work of the respective artists significantly differed. Whereas Kirkeby's first brick sculpture remained fairly unknown to this date, *Equivalent VIII*, Andre's last piece of the series of eight sculptures, *Equivalent I-VIII*, became the object of a famous controversy three years after its acquisition by the Tate Gallery in London. On 15 February 1976 *The Sunday Times* published an article entitled "The Tate drops a costly Brick", after a journalist learned about the high price the museum had paid for Andre's sculpture.[8] Soon after various newspapers and tabloids picked up the issue. Journalists openly questioned the artistic status of the work. "Bricks are not works of art", could be read in *The Daily Mirror*: "Bricks are bricks. You can build walls with them or chuck them through jewellers' windows, but you cannot stack them two deep and call it sculpture." [9] The same newspaper published images of construction workers posing proudly next

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5   Klaus Ottmann, "Per Kirkeby. Subjective Thinker, Anti-Artist, Historical Painter," in: *Per Kirkeby: Paintings and Sculpture*, ed. Klaus Ottmann et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 10-11.

6   "Ein einfacher kleiner Schornstein, der gar nicht gemauert, sondern dessen Steine einfach aufeinander gestapelt waren. Die Backsteine waren ein festes Modul somit systemisch, und garantierten eine einfache, minimalistische Form. Zwei Schlüsselbegriffe während der sechziger Jahre."
    Per Kirkeby, *Handbuch. Texte zu Architektur und Kunst* (Bern and Berlin:Verlag Gachnang & Springer, 1993), 40.

7   Dorothy Kosinski, "A Conversation with Per Kirkeby," in *Per Kirkeby. Paintings and Sculpture*, ed. Dorothy Kosinski and Klaus Ottmann (New Haven and London: Yale University Press) 25-40, 30.

8   Ronald Alley, *Catalogue of the Tate Gallery's Collection of Modern Art other than Works by British Artists* (London: Tate Gallery and Sotheby Parke-Bernet, 1981) 11-12.

9   Carl Andre, "The Brick Abstract," *Art Monthly*, October 1, 1976. James Meyer, *Minimalism. Art and Polemics in the sixties* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 192.

to a 'crafty' brick square of their own making. One of them complained: "It takes us a year laying bricks to earn what one piece of art cost the Tate."[10] Andre's reply to one of the journalists that "My grandfather was a bricklayer and in my childhood I learned a lot about the craft" was of no avail.[11] Unintentionally, Andre's brick sculpture resuscitated earlier controversies around the readymade that questioned the value of craftsmanship in art and the amount of work that an artwork required. Unlike *Equivalents I–VIII*, which as a group convincingly demonstrated horizontality as a new spatial dimension to explore for sculpture, *Equivalent VIII* in its isolation put inadvertent emphasis on its detachment from the notion of 'work' and the value of craftsmanship. Carl Andre attempted to create work that avoided representational meanings and human allusions, while nevertheless recognizing the impossibility of such a venture. "If I had known that it is impossible to make art devoid of human associations because the essence of art is human association," Andre commented later after the affair, "I never would have been able to do what I have done."[12]

Kirkeby, one could say, worked the other way around. While his American colleagues such as Andre, but also Robert Morris or Donald Judd, focused primarily on sculptural qualities such as scale, proportion, colour, shape, structure and mass, the artist wilfully contaminated these qualities in his brick sculptures by various associations and allusions. *Hus. Stakit. Mursten* (House, Fence, Bricks; 1966) extends the balance between 'purity' and 'impurity' of his first brick sculpture and counteracts the minimalist resistance against interpretation. His use of three elements is based on a painterly strategy, which he calls the "Rein/Unrein" mechanism that wilfully infects minimalist clarity. Kirkeby investigates the contradiction between the human inclination to read meanings into objects and images, and art's attempt to empty these very objects and pictures of meaning; this in reaction to minimal artists such as Donald Judd who, Kirkeby believes, "contends that one should free oneself from what is impure, i.e. from linguistic references, associations and such things." [13] Kirkeby doesn't avoid the associative reflex, but rather exploits it. The three volumes of *Hus. Stakit. Mursten* each evoke a different architectural figure: a chimney, a fence and a house – or a "doghouse", as his colleagues from the Experimenting Art School liked to call it.[14] This "Bedeutungslesen" or intentional reading and misreading of meaning into abstract sculptural form seems to prefigure the later work of artists from Düsseldorf, in particular Ludger Gerdes, Thomas Schütte and Reinhard Mucha who set up a "Geistspiel"; a play with the mind of the viewer in the way it recognizes figures or associates images with one another. Reacting against Judd's phenomenological understanding and unitary notion of the 'whole', Ludger Gerdes, for example, argues for an appreciation of art

10 Donald Walker, "Arty Crafty –For the Tate Gallery: A brickbat from the boys on the building site," *Daily Mirror,* 17 February 1976.

11 Mark Dowdney, "Grandad was a bricklayer, too," *Daily Mirror,* 17 February 1976.

12 Carl Andre, *Cuts. Texts 1959-2004* (London and Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), 291.

13 "Deshalb habe ich immer einen klaren Blick für die deutlichen Gegensätze gehabt, auf welche Menschen wie Donald Judd mit ihrer Entwicklungsphilosophie stiessen, und die darin bestehen, dass man sich mehr und mehr vom Unreinen befreit, nämlich von sprachlichen Hinweisen, Assoziationen und solchen Dingen. Da habe ich immer den entgegengesetzten Standpunkt eingenommen." Per Kirkeby, *Gespräche mit Lars Morell* (Cologne: Walther König, 1997), 44.

14 Per Kirkeby, *Naturens blyant* [Nature's Pencil] (Copenhagen: Borgen, 1978), 119.

based on the interplay between reason and imagination.[15] The "Denkmodelle" (thinking models) of Gerdes, Schütte, and Mucha, are in this way similar to the "Denkmäler" (monuments) of Kirkeby that establish a form of *architecture parlante,* a play on a dialectic between self-evidence and elusiveness.

The fence in *Hus. Stakit. Mursten* also reminds of the 1961 minimalist sculpture *First* by Anne Truitt, not surprisingly a peripheral figure within American minimal art. Both *Hus. Stakit. Mursten* and *First* act as a pars pro toto for typical suburban white timber fences. Their objecthood is evident – *Stakit* demarcates one square meter of the floor, whereas *First* places three timber posts on a plinth – but they are both suspended in between reality and fiction, factuality and figuration, architecture and archetype, the sculptural and the pictorial. Because of the ambiguity that characterizes her work, Donald Judd criticized Truitt, alluding to *Southern Elegy* (1962) – a combination of a black plinth and headstone – for being "as thoughtless as the tombstones which they resemble".[16] Clement Greenberg on the other hand praised the anthropomorphic and figurative qualities of her sculptures, declaring polemically that Truitt had anticipated the work of all minimalists.[17] Truitt painted her wooden planks by hand and therefore deliberately sought for a blurring of the distinction between painting and sculpture – an ambiguity that Kirkeby seems to pursue as well with *Hus. Stakit. Mursten* by confronting it with his paintings. In 1965 he had made a four-part painting of a blue fence, measuring ten meters in length, *The Cliffs of Stevns*, which stood midway between being an elongated surface and landscape painting.[18] More explicitly, *Das Urteil des Paris* (1966), a painting of a classic white temple with a blue interior, and with a narrow row of columns, was identical in form and colour to the "doghouse" that Kirkeby exhibited in the same year.[19]

The tension between 'architectural' prismatic qualities and 'painterly' figurative qualities is also discernable in Kirkeby's 1976 sculptural installation *Sphinx, Winkel, Bogen, Tor, Bank*, Säule in Luzern. Exhibited against the background of a selection of his drawings on square Masonite boards, the work consists of a sphinx, a corner, an arch, a gate, a bench, and a pillar, creating as it were an archaeological museum setting with historical stereotypes. This grasp from the architectural lexicon makes up, not unlike the paintings on the background, what the artist calls a 'series'. Whereas the structural seriality in pop art and minimal art empties out through repetition the referential relationship between a sign and an object, Kirkeby treats 'series' as an overarching idea that resonates in the sum of different images.[20] Discharged from their original sign value, the different elements coincide in an all-encompassing

15 Ludger Gerdes, "Über ein doppeltes, einander widerstreitendes Interesse (Judd & Judgement – Using Mentions)," in *Ludger Gerdes*, ed. Ludger Gerdes, Marie Luise Syring, Nicola von Velsen (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 1994).

16 Donald Judd, "In the Galleries: Anne Truitt," *Arts Magazine*, 7 (1963): 61.

17 Meyer, *Minimalism. Art and Polemics in the sixties*, 222.

18 Lars Morell, *The Artist as Polyhistor: the Intellectual Superstructure in the Work of Per Kirkeby* (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2005), 185.

19 Morell, *The artist as polyhistor*, 153.

20 Kirkeby, *Handbuch. Texte zu Architektur und Kunst*, 42.

psychological structure, which he considers "more interesting than its individual elements."[21] In the painting *Kristall* (1983), for example, Kirkeby combines a crystal, a mountain, Bruno Taut's alpine architecture, and the architecture of Erich Mendelsohn through the platonic idea that these appearances are imperfect depictions of an ideal form which remains hidden from the viewer: the crystal.[22] Not unlike the painting *Kristall*, the brick sculpture for the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam (1987), for example, is composed through a condensation of a series of architectural figures, in this case the cross, the round arch, the barrel vault and the podium.

As Thoughtless as the Tombstones which They Resemble?

In the late 1960s – an era within which minimal and conceptual artists such as Robert Smithson, Daniel Buren, and Michael Asher started to question the boundaries of the institutional space of the museum – Per Kirkeby produced a set of happenings and installations which involved him camping in a tent. Building on his training as a geologist, these interventions examined the way in which objects are presented within the context of the museum. In 1967 he had six pole tents exhibited in Gothenburg. During the same year he did a happening, A*rctic II*, at the Aarhus School of Architecture, which among other gestures involved Kirkeby shaping a landscape of gravel inside a tent, while a record of Allan Kaprow's speech "How to Make a Happening" was playing on the background.[23] In 1970 he repeated this gesture when he set up a Bedouin tent at the Louisiana Museum for Modern Art where he resided during the time of the exhibition. The tent – the archetypal expression of a nomadic way of life in nature – provokes the protective and static nature of the modern art museum.[24] In 1974 he set up a 'geological museum' within an art museum drawing from his collection of natural and cultural objects that he had gathered during his travels, thereby implying the importance of coherence and associations for collection building within a modern art museum.

Building on these earlier interventions and his earlier sculptures, it was only a small step for Kirkeby to reposition his brick sculptures outside the walls of the museum. Yet the times were also ripe for it. In the 1980s outdoor art exhibitions were burgeoning, and vigorous debates were held about site-specificity and the place and meaning of art in public space.[25] Artists and curators joined forces to flee the modern art museum, responding to the increasing demands to relate art more directly to 'life' or the 'world'.

Kirkeby's first monumental brick sculptures in public space, such the small Mayan temple *Huset* (1973) in Ikast, and *Räucherofen für Fische* (1975) in Stubbeköbing, were located first on more isolated

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21 "Die Serie ist interessanter als ihre Einzelelemente," in Per Kirkeby, *Bravura: Ausgewählte Essays Aus "bravura" Und "naturens Blyant"* (Bern: Gachnang und Springer, 1984), 144.

22 Kirkeby, *Gespräche mit Lars Morell*, 100.

23 Morell, *The artist as polyhistor,* 153.

24 Kirkeby, *Gespräche mit Lars Morell,* 49.

25 Jane Rendell. *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006).

sites in Denmark.[26] Soon after, the artist received opportunities to position his work also on more ceremonial public spaces in German, Dutch and Danish cities. Yet once again they do so in a manner that is very particular.

Although Kirkeby's brick sculptures are often positioned in the middle of a square or along the promenades in a park, they are remarkably inconspicuous. For *Documenta* 7 (1982) in Kassel he chose an unremarkable spot in the Karlsaue-Park where he built an edifice that inadvertently reminds of neo-classicist electricity kiosk substations that one finds in central Europe. "In any case I want to avoid surroundings that are too polished or too romantic garden sort of type. I want an ordinary place", Kirkeby explained.[27] Most visitors who sought for the sculpture of Kirkeby, walked straight past it.

For *Skulptur. Projekte Münster* (1987) it is more the commonness of the used architectural vocabulary than the sculpture's location on the Hindenburgplatz, which produces the sculpture's anonymity. This virtue of anonymity is according to Kirkeby deeply embedded within classicism: "It is exactly also this quality of anonymity which causes the biggest difficulties in our understanding of classicism, but which cannot be forgotten once it is understood." [28] The sculpture *Münster-Hindenburgplatz I-II* in Münster consists of a square tower and a pedestal with sunken arches, both of which in their materiality and vocabulary refer to the architectural environment. Unlike the conceptual works of artists such as Daniel Buren or Michael Asher, these sculptures aim to inscribe themselves permanently on the site. Buren, by contrast, parodied in Münster the amusement character and called into the question the temporality and institutional boundaries of such manifestations by hanging pennant banners marked with his bar code all over the city centre; and Michael Asher moved a caravan every week in Münster therefore questioning the notion of site-specificity and the mobility of public art. Kirkeby's architectural sculptures conversely do not address the mediatisation of public space or the temporary touristic regime during such art festivals, but the long history and commonplaceness of a place. They stand in public space as if they had always been there, as public monuments that have long lost their actuality. He comments:

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26 Per Kirkeby, *Per Kirkeby: Backsteinskulptur und Architektur: Werkverzeichnis = Brick Sculpture and Architecture: Catalogue Raisonné* (Cologne: Walther König, 1997) 66.

27 "Ich wollte auf jeden Fall für meine Backstein-Skulpturen allzu wohlgepflegte und romantisch-parkartige Umgebungen vermeiden. Ich wollte einen gewöhnlichen Ort." Per Kirkeby as quoted in: *Skulptur Projekte in Münster = Sculpture Projects in Münster 1987* (Münster: Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe, Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, 1987), 8.

28 "Es ist eben auch diese Qualität des Anonymen, die uns beim Verständnis des historische Klassizismus die grössten Schwierigkeiten bereitet, die jedoch nicht mehr zu verliern ist, wenn sie erst erkannt wurde." Per Kirkeby, "Per Kirkeby über Skulptur," in *Raumbilder in Bronze: Per Kirkeby, Markus Lüpertz*, A.R. *Penck*, ed. Ulrich Weisner (Bielefeld: Kunsthalle Bielefeld, 1986), 56.

"Yes, they stand in public space. My explanation is that they are not so persuasive in the sense of a message or something similar. They remain relatively anonymous. In public space you find all sorts of things, urinals, etc. On the face of it, my sculptures work on this level. This is very important to me. I find it almost overpowering when one places a private, personal artwork outside. All those poor people, who must walk by it every day, are oppressed by this damned piece of art, as it urges to live one's life in a more creative way. My things stand there just like so much other furniture in public space. One can go in them or not."[29]

By adhering to the category of the monument, Kirkeby's intervention in Münster's public space bespeaks a different sense of time and history than the actuality of the art event addressed by Asher and Buren – that of a long superseded sense of time and of public-ness as embedded in historical monuments.

Fig. 1. Per Kirkeby, Untitled,
Middelheim Open Air Sculpture Museum,
Antwerp, 1993. Photographs by author.

Whereof One cannot Speak, Thereof one must be Silent

Kirkeby's classicism is a 'language-game' (to borrow a notion from his favourite philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein) with historical fragments that are treated as quasi-empty signs or signifiers without a signified; a game that results in memorials that bring nothing into memory except from the way in which we turn time into history.

Kirkeby's return to the past in sculptures such as the ones that he realised for the Kröller-Müller-Museum in Arnhem (1988) or the Open air museum in Middelheim, Antwerp (1993), is less about restoring the communicative potential of architecture along post-modernist lines, than it is an attempt to create monuments that stage an interplay between a personal and cultural memory of spaces.[30]

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29 "Ja, sie stehen im öffentlichen Raum. Meine Entschuldigung ist, dass sie wenig penetrant sind, im Sinne von einer Botschaft oder ähnlichem. Sie bleiben relativ anonym. Im öffentlichen Raum stehen alle möglichen Sachen, Pissoirs etc. Meine Skulpturen bewegen sich oberflächlich gesehen auf dieser Ebene. Das ist für mich sehr wichtig. Ich finde es eigentlich fast penetrant, wenn man ein sehr privates, persönliches Kunstwerk draussen hinstellt. Alle diese armen Leute, die jeden Tag vorbeilaufen müssen, werden bedroht von diesem verdammten Kunstwerk, wenn es dazu ermahnt, sein Leben kreativer zu führen usw. Meine Sachen stehen einfach da, wie so viele andere Môblierungen im öffentlichem Raum. Man kann hineingehen oder auch nicht. Mann kann vorbeispazieren, auch ohne dass man jemand anderen stört oder man kann ganz buchstäblich hineingehen, wenn man will. Wenn man sich entschliesst, bin ich sicher, dass etwas überspringt. Die meisten wissen nicht, was. Ich baue auf die Vorstellung, dass ganz viel, vielleicht die meisten bedeutenden Vorgänge, auf nichtsprachlichem Wege vor sich gehen."
Per Kirkeby, *Per Kirkeby im Gespräch mit Siegfried Gohr* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1994), 51.

30 For Kirkeby on transparency, see: Kirkeby, *Handbuch. Texte zu Architektur und Kunst,* 12. For Kirkeby on spatial memory, see: Per Kirkeby, "Du vergiβt, dennoch erinnere ich mich," *Kunstforum International*, 25 (1978): 130.

A monument, as Alois Riegl (1858-1905) defined it, "is a work of man erected for the specific purpose of keeping particular human deeds or destinies (or a complex accumulation thereof) alive and present in the consciousness of future generations."[31] They put down a sign that inscribes a name or event in public space. Kirkeby's brick sculptures are not monuments but only appear as one. Silent as a tomb without a name, they only retain the way architecture appears within the category of the monument as a figure that represents the connection of the dimension of time to that of place, so that it sets the framework for remembrance to occur.

The architecture of the monument connects time to stone and therefore expresses a certain idea of time and historicity. Traditionally, monuments are made of stone so that they resist the decaying effect of time. Being able to resist the progression of time, monuments demonstrate the social importance of a particular person, value or event and make it part of the public sphere. However, we do no longer believe that public time can be constructed as a uni-directional history of events, but instead adhere to a postmodernist conception of history that has exchanged continuity for multiple, cross-connected narratives. New monuments prove increasingly unsuccessful in providing a measure of the past, and therefore orienting history. Fewer and fewer monuments have been built in the twentieth century to celebrate those who are in power or to commemorate momentous political events.[32] Except in the case of tombs for the innocent victims of wars, genocides or catastrophes, monuments have become minor players in the definition of the public sphere, and the construction of events that should be regarded as important by the general public. The public domain is instead increasingly dominated by the space of the media, filled with news and current affairs.[33] Monuments seem to have only a minor role to play in this changing topography of the new public space of topicality.

If traditional monuments have become inadequate in conveying our sense of public time and history, what sense of time and history do the brick sculptures of Kirkeby relate to? Elsa van Wezel has argued that his sculptures express a consciousness of the instability and groundlessness of history.[34] Because history no longer has one direction, she argues, there no longer is an ideal of history that justifies Kirkeby's use of brick, and therefore he cannot explain but only tell different stories about why he uses brick. If his sculptures still are places of memory, it is in the way his architectural figures are formed and informed by memories to other images, paintings, sculptures, buildings or stories. Trained as a geologist, one could argue further that he adheres to an understanding of history in which time remains unstable in some parts and condenses under the pressure of weight in other parts. Parallel to this condensation of historical time into images, Kirkeby uses a selection process in his own work that he compares to what is known as iconoclasm

31 Originally published as Alois Riegl, *Der moderne Denkmalkultus: Sein Wesen und seine Entstehung* (Vienna: W. Braumüller, 1903).

32 Mario Carpo, "The postmodern cult of monuments," *Future Anterior*, 2 (2007): 50-60.

33 Bart Verschaffel, *Figuren*: Essays (Mechelen: aa50, 1995), 123.

34 Elsa van Wezel, "Memento Mori, Memento vivere, Over de problematiek van het historisch bewustzijn en het ontwerpen van architectonische gedenktekens bij Schinkel, Loos en Kirkeby," *Oase* 25 (1989), 28-37, 25.

in art history. In the same way as he over-paints his paintings as a way to keep only the important or great structures, his brick sculptures are series of images condensed under the pressure or weight of Kirkeby's personal history of architecture.

Yet, the strength of Kirkeby's brick sculptures is not the result from the way he organizes his own memory, but from how they anticipate them becoming part of a collective memory at the place where they are located. The fact that they include references to monumental archetypes such as castles, churches or gates makes them perform as memory places or "lieux de memoire" that, as Pierre Nora describes, are invested and imprinted with collective memories, functioning as backdrops for the small and big stories of the personal life of the surrounding inhabitants and the passer-by.[35] Just as architectural monuments that we have known since childhood have the capacity to take us back to the life that we lived in front of them, Kirkeby's brick sculptures speak to how we collectively connect our personal history to place.

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35 Pierre Nora, *Rethinking France = Les Lieux De Mémoire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); see also Verschaffel, *Figuren: Essays,* 126.

SAHANZ