

JON WOOD RESISTANT POLLER

in:

BETTINA POUSTTCHI - REALITY RESET

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Some found objects seem to carry their invisibility with them (perhaps partly due to their ubiquity); others don't. Bottle racks don't, but bollards, it seems, do, however transformed they are. One way of thinking about this work is to see it as an object which makes a journey; an object that moves from being "street furniture" to being "gallery sculpture" (via the studio and foundry); an object found, remade and relocated. But looking at how it ripples across Bettina Pousttchi's oeuvre as a whole, we get other associations and a curious combinatory sense of sex and surveillance, pole dancing and policing, ID cards and eye candy. It also seems to talk an international language through which we might see US, German, French associations, at once artistic and intellectual. For some reason, I often think of Paris with Pousttchi's work and I know she studied there. I always thought it was philosophy and film studies, but it was art. I also think of the work of Henri Lefèbvre and the ways spatial games are explored in her work. Turning to his groundbreaking book, *The Urban Revolution*, I looked up his two paragraphs, *Against the Monument* and *For the Monument*¹. I imagined for a moment what this text would look like if the word "monument" were replaced by "bollard." I also wondered what *Resistant Poller* looked like outside on the street—in our age of the bollard (if not the monument) today. I have not seen it displayed in this context, but I know that Pousttchi has shown it there and it was stolen a few days later. The Lefèbvre text, however, once found, edited and reprinted reads as follows:

Against the bollard. The bollard is essentially repressive. It is the seat of an institution (the church, the state, the university). Any space that is organized around the bollard is colonized and oppressed. The great bollards have been raised to glorify conquerors and the powerful. Occasionally they glorify the dead or the beauty of death (the Taj Mahal) in palaces and tombs. The misfortune of architecture is that it wanted to construct

bollards, but the idea of habiting them was either conceived in terms of those bollards or neglected entirely. The extension of bollard space to habiting is always catastrophic, and for the most part hidden from those who are subject to it. Bollard splendor is formal. And although the bollard is always laden with symbols, it presents them to social awareness and contemplation (passive) just when those symbols, already outdated, are beginning to lose their meaning, such as the symbols of the revolution on the Napoleonic Arc de Triomphe.

For the bollard. It is the only conceivable or imaginable site of collective (social) life. It controls people, yes, but does so to bring them together. Beauty and the bollard go hand in hand. The great bollards were transfunctional (cathedrals) and even transcultural (tombs). This is what gave them their ethical and aesthetic power. Bollards project onto the land a conception of the world, whereas the city projected (and continues to project) social life (globality). In their very essence, and sometimes at the very heart of a space in which the characteristics of a society are most recognizable and commonplace, bollards embody a sense of transcendence, a sense of being elsewhere. They have always been utopic. Throughout their height and depth, along a dimension that was alien to urban trajectories, they proclaimed duty, power, knowledge, joy, hope.