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“I breathe life into the sculptures by extracting the air”

Internationally renowned conceptual artist Ewerdt Hilgemann is to install a group of sculptures from his “Implosions” series on the Messer-Platz square in Bad Soden am Taunus.

Next Friday, the German-Dutch artist Ewerdt Hilgemann will install a group of stainless steel sculptures on the new Messer-Platz square in Bad Soden. Three stainless steel columns, arranged in a group and each measuring around six metres in height, have been created on behalf of industrial gases specialist Messer and will form the centre of the newly constructed complex of buildings consisting of the company headquarters, the adjoining Adolf Messer Forum conference centre and the historic station building.

In his studio in the Dutch town of Hardinxveld-Giessendam near Rotterdam, Ewerdt Hilgemann used a vacuum pump to slowly extract the air from the three hermetically welded stainless steel structures. This process causes the cubes to contract, giving rise to pronounced kinks which look as though they have been caused by external forces and which therefore contrast markedly with the still-gleaming stainless steel surface. Hilgemann describes his work as follows: “I deform geometric shapes. People plan, we plan everything, and that is what I do with my cubes, pyramids and columns. Then the air is sucked out of them and the air on the outside presses against them. This air is my chisel, my hammer, my tool. I am an airsmith.”

Throughout his career, Ewerdt Hilgemann has worked with a variety of materials, including wood, aluminium and the famous Italian Carrara marble. The artist uses highgrade steel for the “Implosions” sculptures: “Stainless steel has a broader spectrum because the sculptures absorb their surroundings. If the sky is blue, then they become blue; if they are surrounded by grass, then they acquire a green hue from below. Deformation lends the high-quality material a dramatic vibrancy.”

Ewerdt Hilgemann, who was born in Witten, in the Ruhr area, in 1938, knows from experience that people are certainly not reluctant to touch his sculptures: “I may suck the air out, but ultimately I breathe life into the sculpture. Beforehand, it is just a boring tin, a boring cube, a boring rectangular column. After deformation, it has a certain haptic quality - people want to touch it and feel it and understand it.” Imploded stainless steel structures from Hilgemann’s studio have been installed in public spaces in Berlin (Germany), Delft and Amsterdam (Netherlands), Elblag (Poland), Los Angeles (USA) and Seoul (Korea) among other places. Ewerdt Hilgemann will also be showcasing his art in New York soon.

The official opening of the newly built Messer-Platz in the heart of Bad Soden will take place on 16 September; on the same day that Hilgemann’s work of art is to be unveiled. The sculpture’s three columns, and the fact that they consist of metal and air, are intended to symbolise the Messer Group’s areas of business, the three generations of entrepreneurs and the triad of employees, customers and the family company that is so important to the enterprise. The internationally renowned conceptual artist Ewerdt Hilgemann had won the design competition organised by Messer last year with his works entitled “Implosions.”

<https://newsroom.messergroup.com/en/i-breathe-life-into-the-sculptures-by-extracting-the-air/>

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