

Secession, 25 February 2016, 7 p.m.

Sofie Thorsen, *Spielplastiken | Play Sculptures*

Book presentation with Heike Eipeldauer and Sofie Thorsen

*Sofie Thorsen: Spielplastiken | Play Sculptures* puts the focus on an artistic phenomenon in postwar Vienna that has been granted little recognition to date—playground sculptures for children created by artists as part of the large-scale “percent-for-art” program initiated by the City of Vienna. This program aimed at promoting and popularizing art in public space combined with the hope of a more “humanist” orientation of functional urban planning. The marginalized area where “art in public space” and “design for children” overlap proved to be an ideal field of experimenting for developing a modernist, abstract vocabulary of forms into a generally accepted idiom for which the time did not yet seem ripe in Austria in other fields.

Since 2010 Sofie Thorsen has conducted a historical exploration into the typology of the play sculpture, which she has artistically transformed into several groups of works. Since most of these play sculptures have disappeared from the cityscape, Thorsen relies mostly on photographic archival materials, placing them in relation with international urban planning proposals by Egon Møller-Nielsen, Aldo Van Eyck, or Isamu Noguchi. From these materials she then makes photographs, collages, paper sculptures, and installations. Sofie Thorsen’s extensive search for traces is presented as a dialog with hitherto unpublished designs from the 1950s and 60s by Viennese artists like Josef Schagerl and Josef Seebacher-Konzut, who injected a rare utopian element into the dull architecture of postwar reconstruction. Combining artistic reflection and scientific study, the publication is the first to highlight the historic moment when art and the general public were brought together and analyses this moment as part of a Europe- and USA-wide discourse on urban planning, architecture and abstract sculpture, aesthetics and function as well as art and play.

Sofie Thorsen

*Spielplastiken | Play Sculptures*

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