

"Instead of talking about aesthetics, beauty and contemplation you had to start thinking in terms of epistemology, ontology, indexing, a whole different kind of vocabulary came in. But all of this was driven, I think, by a kind of desperation as to what to do after modernism's nervous breakdown, after modernism was almost laughable in the early 60s. And it was driven by what to do, how to work with the wreckage."¹ This is how artist Mel Ramsden describes the context in which the *Art & Language* collective's works were created, in Stefan Römer's documentary *Conceptual Paradise* from 2006. The film brings together the voices of three generations of conceptual artists, focusing on the following questions: How to apprehend conceptual art? Are there conceptual paradigms? What would an updated version of these look like?

Naming her work after Mel Ramsden's expression, Simone Schardt evokes the moment of crisis in modernism associated with the emergence of the theoretical principles of conceptual art. With distance and nuance, she reappropriates the questions raised in Römer's film. Using traditional techniques - drawing, painting and canvas - and reinvesting the colour concepts developed by architects Eileen Gray, Lux Guyer and Lina Bo Bardi, the artist seizes on "wreckage", or rather fragments of modernism, which she transposes into a new frame of reference. Schardt uses the Lacanian operator of the rhombus, which, in a theory of the unconscious structured as a language, indicates relationships of conjunction/disjunction and inclusion/exclusion. The representations refer to the unconscious that structures the relationship between the artist, the work and its reception. Schardt's strategy of exploring modernist and (post-)conceptualist languages between objectification and subjectivation does not limit her questioning to conceptualist paradigms. Indeed, through the idea of a non-unitary subject, she questions the attribution of roles within the system of art and its critique, as well as Foucauldian techniques of the self.

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¹ Mel Ramsden, in *Conceptual Paradise* (2006) by Stefan Römer. The interview with *Art & Language* (Michael Baldwin and Mel Ramsden), excerpts from which were selected for the film, was recorded on January 8, 2004 at the Migros Museum, Zürich.