

DUST BUDDIES

The camera is gliding over a seemingly infinite surface. We can see irregular, amorphous forms in delicate earthy tones, as well as white, yellow, and black. What is represented invokes an abstract landscape or a sample of some material, the meaning of which remains unclear for the moment. As the camera gradually zooms out, a blue rectangle moves over the surface like a sensor, scanning, mapping. A technical buzzing accompanies the movement. What we are looking at is slowly revealed: the microscopic world of the finest dust particles collected from the roof of the Cosmic House in London, which was designed by the architect and theorist Charles Jencks (1939–2019).

Sonia Leimer's 19-minute film *Cosmic House* begins with this microscopic journey, before it shows images of the interior architecture of the building, then continuing a little later with shots of a sprawling natural landscape. Leimer plays with the different levels of perception here. She transforms the notion of scale from a purely spatial context into a relational structure of time and space. Dust becomes the durational medium into which urban, material, and atmospheric processes are inscribed. Architecture, on the other hand, seems like a temporary formation — a fleeting condition within geological and cosmic temporal dimensions.

These themes are characteristic for the works assembled in Leimer's exhibition *Dust Buddies*. Manifested as three-dimensional shapes, the themes become the series of sculptures called *Fänger* (Catchers) that define the first room of the gallery. Their aluminum and copper tubes unfold into large spatial, partially symmetrical objects that straddle the boundary between sculpture and architecture. These airy constructions of flowing elements evoke associations of both natural and architectural structures. The curved, in-between spaces seem to open up and make us think about trapped particles and remnants — as if the sculptures could incorporate and store elements filtered from their environment. Their unfinished shapes are in a dialogue with the surroundings. The *Fänger* could thus be interpreted as an archipelago, a concept coined by the philosopher Édouard Glissant (1928–2011) in which identity is not seen as a coherent whole, but as a structure of relationships and interstices. Like islands in an archipelago, the sculptures are at once independent as well as open to what is happening between them, to what attaches and connects itself to them, to what establishes a relation.

The second group of works is the *Dust Buddies*, which is also the title of the exhibition. Consisting of a few larger and many smaller sculptures standing on the floor, they are spread throughout the rooms of the gallery, engaging in a dialogue with each other. These works are the result of Leimer's intensive investigation of individual cosmic and industrial dust grains, which she observed under the high-performance microscope of the Museum of Natural History in Vienna. Made of bronze, silicone, aluminum, and glass, the *Dust Buddies* that were inspired by those found particles can be regarded as free artistic translations of an invisible world into physical space. They are thus an expression of Leimer's fascination for what seems otherwise marginal: the dust that appears as the outermost layer of built structures, where the traces of use, decay, and urban history collect. Like in the film, Leimer moves between different dimensional levels. The act of observing through a microscope becomes an encounter between the artist and the object — an

exchange that is echoed in the sculptures that integrate the cosmic with architecture.

A connecting level is created in the exhibition by a flat display that runs along the floor of the entire gallery and on which some of the sculptures are placed, while others are dispersed in the rooms. This gesture of a joining, unfinished plinth can be understood as another variation of the archipelago theme in that it is a structure that creates a connection without a unifying effect.