

Mirror and Container

By Mikkel Bogh

In the sculptural installation *Shells of Mirrors* two usually conflicting functions are united, so that what is created is a formally simple, yet in terms of content a complex, statement. The work reflects and retains at the same time. The sharply faceted concave mirrors send the sun's rays in many directions, they reflect their physical surroundings and the movement which may occur around them. This is not something they do neutrally (but then is a mirror ever actually neutral?) The polystyrene mirrors have a slightly undulating surface which gives them a water-like appearance. In this way information is mixed on reflection until the light is sent out again so that the information for the beholder is retained in the container. The reflections transform, redirect and break up. Thus the material, the objects' own design and placing are far from unimportant. One could even say that their significance arises, precisely, in the interplay of their shape, their placing and the actions which take place around them. The environment will always be a part of their, at once crystalline and endlessly variable expression. The fundamental function is, however, still to send out what comes in, even if this is actually in another form. Perhaps the shells make us think of antennae of the kind perched on weather stations or military facilities. They point upwards as though their task was to pick up signals from above. This association corresponds to their function as mirrors which receive and transmit light. But, at the same time, it makes us aware of their other function, their retaining function. In fact they also function as containers which, in principal – had it not been for the transparent panels which cover the shells – could gather dust, rainwater, insects and what have you. We can see that they are capable of containing something, but because of their real "closedness" they become, first and foremost, images of a container-function, though possibly even through collecting and retaining something, so that it does not run or fly off to the four winds.

What does this mean for the way in which we read the two objects? Can we see them as mirrors and closed containers at the same time? In one sense that is quite unproblematic, for mirrors and containers are, after all, exactly what they are, these two covered shells, quite devoid of paradoxes, a little like garden cloches. On the metaphorical level this does however pose more problems. To mirror and reflect is one thing; to gather, preserve and retain is something quite different. *Shells of Mirrors* does both things at the same time. And this duplicity is supplemented by another: they signal that, on the one hand, they are autonomous objects, in any event a variety of unadapted foreign body, and on the other they are context-dependent and site-specific installations. It is in the point of intersection between these dimensions that the shells acquire their particular value. As context-dependent, reflecting installations, they leave room for the surroundings without imposing new "interesting" forms; as autonomous, retaining and

transforming objects, on the other hand, they encroach visually on their surroundings in a manner which indicates a difference. By this they point out that we never simply find ourselves in this “here” and this “now”, but connect ourselves to, and communicate with, other landscapes, other worlds and other people, whether this is visually, via the mobile phone or in the idea of another place.

Neither, in the light of this observation, would it be completely out of place to see in the shape of the shells a discreet modification of the utopian spatial constructions which are also reflected in the architecture of the Citadel.