"Within the framework of the global security state, the border has become a place of danger. It is no longer at all the place of exchange that the border is in its classic definition."[1]

Excerpt from *The Logistical Sublime*, a text by Alexander Klose on the work of Romain Löser

At one time, abstraction was treated as the quintessence of liberation from ideological, religious or historical indoctrination. An ideal path for abstraction consisted in renouncing all figuration and reducing itself to geometric forms and unmixed colors. Malevich, De Stijl, Mondrian, Bauhaus. The power of the grid.

Although radically reductive and technicist in tendency, turned toward the industrial world and hostile to a return to ornamental nature, the new aesthetic revolution of the modern sees itself as a global movement, both material and spiritual, that claims to reform every domain. According to Rosalind Krauss, it draws its expressive force mainly from "the mythic force of the grid": *[I]t makes us able to think we are dealing with materialism (…) while at the same time it provides us with a release into belief (…). Therefore (…) the grid is (…) a structure (…) that allows a contradiction between the values of science and those of spiritualism to maintain themselves within the consciousness of modernism, or rather its unconscious, as something repressed.*[2]
The abstract painting of the avant-gardes, before and after the war, inaugurates a return to a transcendent and metaphysical dimension that takes place in or beneath the surface, like the gold-leaf backgrounds of medieval paintings.[3]

Romain Löser's paintings are composed of monochrome, rectangular surfaces of different sizes and colors. The images ostensibly refer to color field painting and Minimal art."You are dollhousing minimal art," a critic said during a studio visit. By this he meant a subversive relationship to that part of art history. Yet the formal qualities of Romain Löser's paintings have their source elsewhere. They come from the pragmatic world of logistics. The colors, shapes and dimensions of the colored surfaces derive directly from stackable plastic transport boxes. These standardized boxes, between pallets, containers, production sites and large distribution centers on one side, and warehouses and shops on the other, represent the last link connecting the abstract interconnectedness of the global logistics system of our "flat earth" with the consumer. He is interested in the diversity that emerges within seriality, just as much as in the technocratic and bureaucratic violence that standardization brings: it manifests itself in

1 Achille Mbembe in conversation with Joseph Confavreux on the occasion of the publication of Achille Mbembe's book *Politiques de l'inimitié*, Paris, Éditions La Découverte, 2016, 184 pp.

2 Rosalind Krauss E., *Grids*, in: October, Vol. 9 (Summer, 1979), S. 50-64; S. 52-54

3 Comparison of the function of the gold-leaf background in medieval religious painting:
Belting, Hans, *Bild und Kult. Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst*, Munich 1993, and Schöne, Wolfgang, *Über das Licht in der Malerei*, Berlin 1954.

every element that makes up the chain. If there is a domain in which the modernist doctrine of form follows function has been applied consistently, it is the world of pure "operationality." Standardized containers, from the metal shipping container to the plastic crate, by way of packaging, are at once the agents and the emblems of this socio-technical conglomerate.
It is therefore justified to set aside for a moment the art-historical references that Löser's paintings bring with them, in order to consider a completely different category of images underlying his thinking: the operational diagram of a storage plan, stacking manuals for optimizing space and the flow of materials… and to see what happens when this diagram is applied to the legacy of geometric abstraction.

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