

# JACKY STRENZ

*Galerie*

## GIOVANNI SORTINO

Gianluca, Ian, Paola, Ash, Giovanni

*February 1 – March 23, 2014*

### Giovanni Sortino *Gianluca, Jan, Paola, Ash, Giovanni*

Whether you hallucinate flying sparks over a labyrinth, or fireflies under grid investigation – Giovanni Sortino's many-faceted paintings could provoke unfettered lyricism. But tracking down remnants of what is already known is not the issue. Instead of sifting through new textures in search of old and hence recognisable shapes, why not enjoy what defies easy recognition? Seen from a distance, overlaying structures free from any organizing hierarchy seem to potentially continue left, right and centre, which makes them match the main principle of all over-painting. Upon closer inspection areas start to emerge from the seemingly even canvases, before fairly distinctive gestalts become apparent – almost. Within the sometimes liquid, sometimes gaseous environment diagonal and horizontal fields solidify into clusters standing out, only to vanish under the inquisitive gaze as slowly as they evolved – if not necessarily without a trace.

For traces are in fact the foundation of these paintings, which should rather considered *décollages*, for they are the result of removing material. The visible surface is what remains after tangible mass is gone. The scraping off of overlaying coats runs in accordance with the homoeopathic maxim: Clear the stuff away in order to get the information out.

Hence the lineaments, suggestive of micro- at other times macrocosmic structures, are remnants of painting in reverse – heading back through various layers to the notion of the person who gave the respective painting or de-painting its title: *Gianluca* or *Jan* or *Paola* or *Ash*.

The memory of existing individuals determines the non-existent images, put together and taken apart by our impatient visual apparatus, used to synthesize and analyse data at will. The familiarity with Sortino's friends' past and present induces colours and gestures along with those strange objects interrupting the quiet coming and going of shapes, be they curved, jagged or throbbing rectangles.

The diversely tempered paintings share the ability to spur several senses into action at once. Already the slightest hint of synaesthetic capacities enables the viewer to associate sensations of warmth and cold, or throws the sense of balance off balance, since the visual vibration could be literally staggering. In addition sounds from the organic as well as the electronic poles of the optical acoustic spectrum are perceptible.

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A quick glance at 20<sup>th</sup> century art and design proves that the allure of highly attractive craquelure is prone to degenerate into controlled hazard's uncontrolled use.

For decades semi-abstract patterns of artificial patina have been crawling over the skin of an industrial society that wishes not to be one. Sortino however eschews imitation of growth and decay by way of removing the neat coat. Instead of charming appearances his work is about lived experiences – namely those of *Gianluca, Jan, Paola, Ash* along with the artist himself, whose stratospheric images preserve the temporal progress of his relationships.

These condensations, obscurations and illuminations are sufficiently specific to kick off all sorts of associations from gentle to downright dramatic ones, while volatile enough to keep those chains of thought open on every side. Instead of metaphorical descriptions along the line “if the person was a stellar constellation or the content of a Petri dish – what would they look like?”, Sortino unfolds the unambiguous ambiguity of the customary individual in front of our eyes, which look for shapes and find shaping instead.

Text: Charlotte Lindenberg