

Vittorio Brodmann – Zweig im Regen

November 14, 2019 – February 09, 2020

Opening: November 13, 2019, 19:00

Behind two chattering water coolers that share their time in the Kunstverein's atrium, the works of Zweig im Regen appear. The paintings unfold the relationships between disparate strategies of representation and embodiment within the language of their medium which has now been conventionalized to the point of tableau-like rooms reminiscent of sitcom sets—rooms where painting turns into an inescapable site. Within this setting, Brodmann's portraits juxtapose and simultaneously integrate styles from animated films and comics with historicized forms of painting.

The droopy, slightly goofy characters, flat and shadowless, with clenched jaws, empty gazes, and goatees, sit in an awkward and unusual 100 x 100 cm boxed format. Through the process of painting, Brodmann's works evolve, figure by form, form by figure, collapsing and reorganizing immediately. Against the expansive backdrop of abstraction, representational forms emerge. The once candy pink, cadmium red, and clanking turquoise surface, clearly and equally distributed into three horizontal stripes, of which traces still partially remain, has now morphed into literal fields of color. Long gone are their hard edges, which now run in uneven lines, bowed and squiggled as horizons or mountain ranges. Thus, as Brodmann's work comes into form, it assumes a temporal dimension while staging a surface's recline into depth. Similarly, other works ask at which moment a line becomes a figure and a surface a space (and vice versa). The tension of these transitions remains suspended.

Where figures solidify, manifest transparently, or adapt in other ways to the overall scheme organizing the work, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish them from the entire work. The contemporary entropy of painting, embodied by the figures' failure to enclose a singular inner logic, regenerates the visual topography of the medium. Entangled figuration and abstraction, form and surface, figure and ground, depth, fading, and foreshortening all make the portrait an avatar of painting that struggles to contain itself, prompting the question: What are the coordinates of this proxy? If painting echoes the inescapability of the sitcom, then Brodmann—mixing signals as both a process and site of investigation for painting to come into form through its own language—renders the medium as necessarily unstable and fixed at the same time.