

Two years ago, immediately after Herbert Brandl had represented Austria at the Venice Biennial 2007, we presented new works by the artist for which he introduced the title Fata Morgana in the catalogue published subsequently. In the exhibition at the Deichtorhallen in Hamburg (April to August 2009) Brandl resumed this audacious balancing act between figuration and abstraction in mostly large-format paintings. With the works presented in our latest exhibition Spektrolith the artist is referring to a natural wealth of colours and forms and evokes a sense of landscapes as well as of pure light and colour.

*[...] Brandl's paintings are ambivalent and resist a clear interpretation and analysis. They vacillate between figurative reference and abstraction. All too deceptive appears the romantic glow of the red sunset, the tempestuous scenario of the cloudscapes, and the heat lightning on the picture panel. A flaming red, sfumato- like veiling, or sunlight laboriously breaking through the hazy atmosphere [...] Seemingly made up of colour fields, the picture acquires a heightened autonomy. Wherever an impression of depth begins to emerge, Brandl counters it with a rough brushstroke, wipes out the sunlight shine or the atmospheric wafts of mist. Colour runs down the canvas and right away underlines the factual flatness of the medium of painting [...] Brandl's approach to painting is a decidedly open one, allowing a wide spectrum of options within this medium. Florian Steininger 2002*

*[...] At the beginning of each century, artists are faced with the challenge to meet this new era with its generally unpredictable processes and developments. To free oneself of the secret and explicit norms of the predominant art of the early century, to invent a new space for art, this has never been a creation ex nihilo, but an act of Hegelian "sublation" as it were, that doesn't throw the baby out with the bath water and itself makes the painting of the century gone past visible and palpable in a new manner. Such a quality is brought to bear by Herbert Brandl's paintings of recent years. They appear to have shed the ballast of the tradition of the twentieth century. Instead, they embark on radically new, simplified paths of combining light and colour and from the omnipresent availability of photographic images in the digital age draw the conclusion that from the distant memory of certain of these images it is possible to paint seemingly classical portraits of particular freshness, tension and inventiveness. Robert Fleck 2009*

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