

After 30 years of activity in the gallery business and a longstanding friendship with Mai 36 Galerie, Victor Gisler has invited his Belgian colleague to curate an exhibition. Micheline Tob-Szwajcer has selected five artists of various nationalities who work conceptually and also dedicate their practice to questions concerning painting. The works shown in the exhibition occupy a broad range from pure painting with self-referential claims to clear, precisely formulated ideological stances and attitudes that go beyond genres.

Bernard Frize (*1954 in Saint-Mandé, France) focuses on painting itself as the theme of his work. He plays with chance and lets the choice of colour, paintbrush and the format of the canvas happen by leaving it to nature or to his imagination. In this way Frize merely determines the structure or the way in which the colours are applied with simple brushstrokes on the canvas and expand over the surface. Even when Frize pours the paint directly onto the canvas he does not, in contrast to Jackson Pollock and his Drippings, take any decisions. His compositions can but do not have to develop; the only decisive factor is the immediate deposit of the paint on the canvas.

Daan van Golden (*1936 in Holland) makes no distinction between art and life. He discovers the aesthetically appealing in the everyday and shows us familiar things in an unusual manner. Thus he appropriates images from his environment by capturing strange moments that he either photographs or translates into painting. He combines new with existing works (paintings, photos, screen prints) in multiple ways and by arranging them in ever new constellations he brings them together in the most heterogeneous relationships. When he, as part of this process, allows painting and photography to enter into a dialogue with one another, his works continually appear under new angles. The painting *Celui qui fut pris*, 2007, seems to be about an abduction and looks like a silhouette. In this respect it communicates with the photograph of a pale yellow portrait of a woman on a black, medallion-shaped background.

The works of Guy Mees (in Antwerp, 1935-2003) are also related to silhouettes: colourful strips of paper arranged in lines and stapled to the bare wall. Although they are heavily reduced and structured two-dimensionally, through the various green and blue tones they in some way evoke light and shadow. They thus acquire a spatial dimension. Guy Mees entitled this series *Verloren Ruimte* or "lost space". In actual fact it concerns two very different groups of work that examine the theme of "lost space" in modern art. The works in the first group were made between 1960 and 1967 and those in the second between the middle of the '80s and the early '90s. The works made in the '60s consist of lace fabric and frequently of pink, blue or white neon light as well, all materials that suggest a sensuous, erotically charged world full of romantic moments. In contrast the later wall works communicate access to another imaginary space and are therefore comparable to classical

paintings. At the same time they can be interpreted as neutral works that draw attention exclusively to themselves.

Christopher Wool (*1955 in Boston, Massachusetts) brings together and plays off against each other the figurative and non-figurative in his paintings. Sometimes considered, sometimes spontaneously, he sprays, wipes and rolls. Thus he draws lines on the canvas with the spray gun that he wipes clean again shortly afterwards with a cloth soaked in solvent. In this way a new image is created in which clear lines have to assert themselves against smudged surfaces. These lines, caught in their desire for self-assertion, produce an incredible dynamic. Wool's paintings display the entire variety of his techniques. In his silk screen prints on paper too we encounter his interest in abstract processes, namely the relationship between line and surface.

The works of Heimo Zobernig (*1958 in Mauthen, Ka?rnten) are characterised by a laconic and extremely reduced economy, in both formal and aesthetic terms. Zobernig is originally from the Viennese Neo-Geo circle and re-examined Minimal Art and Conceptual Art in diverse ways. His objects, sculptures, rooms, paintings and videos elude a single interpretation; the artist blends rather the boundaries between abstract art, design and architecture. Perhaps this is also because his works consciously present themselves in many ways as inartistic, even though they are highly considered. In the mid '90s Zobernig made striped paintings that in their graphic arrangement recall the test images of television monitors. The vertical block-like stripes refuse in their strict observance of form an explicit painterly gesture. One of Zobernig's most recent series of works consists of canvases with a monochrome ground, on which expensive Swarovski jewels are stuck in wasteful quantities. In complete contrast to his usual manner of using succinct materials to question the value of a work of art, the artist here avoids the discipline and radicalism of reduced painting and flirts with Pop-like, baroque attitudes.

[Text: Dominique von Burg]

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