

Thomas BAYRLE has always cited his time working in a weaving plant as the formal trigger for his practice as an artist. For him the trceries of thread and the assembly line motif tie in with mass communication, the industrialisation of Europe in the 1960s and the similar process China is now undergoing. The threads have become freeway networks and the motifs are shaped by an accumulation of distinct elements; but the whole is always present in the part, the driving force being a full-time, dizzyingly kaleidoscopic similarity of form.

For his second Air de Paris show, Thomas BAYRLE is presenting works from the past that have rarely or never been exhibited, together with very recent pieces. Among the former are two pictures from 1978 and 1980, painted and repainted – but unfinished because by their very nature they cannot be finished. In the large-format Putzen endless repetitions of cars form the German word for "car wash", but what they primarily offer is a kind of "car dream".

In the big woven cardboard works from his Chinese series of 2005, the interlacings crystallise as Chinese characters that chime with the silkscreened image in a paradoxical but accomplished union of form and content. In the most recent works, from Bayrle's Agnus Dei series, intertwined freeways morphed into staves for medieval monastic chants signal a return to the mystical inspiration of the big collages of 1985, shown here for the first time: remnants of photographs of urban motifs give rise to big, full-blown roses reminiscent of Angelus Silesius's "The rose is without why; she blooms because she blooms." And so the exhibition foregrounds the metaphorical reach of that foundational factory experience, together with the spiritual dimension so paradoxically associated with it from the very outset. For him the monotony of the assembly line conjures up not just consumerism and mass communication, but also the mystical experience.

Cars, freeways, cities, motifs: all of them come together on the same assembly line. Historical materialism – just like the great mystics – has always insisted that everything is part of everything else.

*(This document was automatically generated by Contemporary Art Library.)*