

PETER ZIMMERMANN

layer logic

Opening: Friday, September 13, 2024, 6 – 10 pm

Exhibition: September 11 – October 26, 2024

PRESS RELEASE

Peter Zimmermann's paintings possess the viewer with their amorphous shapes and jelly-like colors that leak from the canvas into our inner cortex. They capture us with an impressionism of colour, light and form, generating a sensory experience that interferes with our binary perception of the world today. We may believe that we are looking at a digital image such as a screen-saver, but this illusion is the result of Zimmermann's technology of enchantment.^[1] Through a meticulous manual layering of epoxy paint spiked with pigment, he transgresses the precision suggested by computer-generated iconography and creates paintings that are mesmerizing both for their graceful beauty and ideational rigor. The new works on show at Nagel Draxler Berlin are watery in texture and soft to the eye. They draw one into their pools of colour that glide over one another mysteriously.

In his conceptual approach to painting, Zimmermann works with his personal archive of digital images all the while scouring the internet for changes in pictorial code. Having identified an element from his data bank, he defamiliarizes the original and reworks it using filters and graphic algorithms. The digital prototype becomes nothing more than a split second déjà-vu, a pulse of light remodeled through the manipulation of epoxy resin on canvas. As a result of this remarkable transubstantiation, Zimmermann not only deconstructs visual systems mediated by commercial marketing, but also defies the anachronism of painting as an affect-driven form of expression. Sources of light ricochet off the epoxy relief which, when photographed, dupe the eye into imagining fine sinuous lines of white pigment running across the landscape of luminescent colour.

Zimmermann's approach to painting originated during the institutional critique of the 1980s and the art scene in Cologne where he continues to live and work today. He is known for his early paintings of atlas and travel guides (1987-1992), the series of reproduced Jackson Pollock catalogues (1995-1999), and his language and grid or raster paintings (1991-2001). In the mid-1990s, he began pouring epoxy resin onto canvas simulating the glow of the screen through paint and creating the trompe l'oeil effect of a printed finish. His last show at Nagel Draxler Galerie in Cologne in 2022 was "Stickerwand". Next to paintings in oil on Dibond that

suggested the finger-traces of screen-swiping, he created a vast mural made from sticky labels with repetitive permutations of logos, memes and texts that spread down from the walls of the gallery onto the floor in a patterned arrangement. Here text was seen as a component of painting, as an image typology to be decoded in the same way as a pictorial representation.

This semiotic relationship between image and text is carried over in the designations Zimmermann has given to his new paintings. Written in lowercase, words such as “minting”, “core”, “tongue”, “slate” and “font” are identifiers, like a code or symbol in a computer program. They may emerge at the start of the painting process, perhaps while Zimmermann is listening to music in his studio or remembering a line from a book he read recently. Only occasionally do we find a discernable connection to the painting itself, like the red of a tongue or the green shade of mint. Through this poetic bond, Zimmermann appears to be naming his paintings rather than merely giving them titles, thereby distinguishing the illustrational from a more autonomous, enigmatic dialogue between word and icon.

In tune with Gottfried Boehm’s understanding of “pictorial logic”, Zimmermann’s paintings activate thought while offering sensuous, non-verbal articulations of the distorted realism produced by digital vectors and artificial intelligence.^[2] Yet, however we wish to analyze his work, the sheer incandescence of Peter Zimmermann’s paintings is both about logic and simultaneously beyond it. The reception by the viewer transcends the conceptual rules that the artist may refer to. Indeed, these paintings lure one into a feeling of enchantment, of magic, beyond the bulimia of mediatized images that flood our daily lives.

Clémentine Deliss

^[1] Alfred Gell, “The Art of Anthropology. Essays and Diagrams, 1999 (2006) edited by Eric Hirsch, Berg New York.

^[2] Boehm speaks of “pictorial logic and pictorial strategies.” He says, “I will even try to show that the history of art in its innovative fundamental processes has something to do with the new development of such altered ways of seeing.” Gottfried Boehm, “Auge um Auge”, interview with Stefan Germer and Isabelle Graw in *Texte zur Kunst*, issue 7, september 1992, p. 97-129.