

Holger Endres

Text

Holger Endres picks up where, art historically, the hotspot of abstract painting is located in the 1960s—among the colleagues of the New York School of Abstraction, whose chief art critic Clement Greenberg propagated pure, abstract painting as true art. Catchphrases are "flatness", a color space without illusionism, and yet "openness", namely the possibility of transcendence when looking at the picture. Thus the art work becomes all the more a projection screen of one's own ideas with meditative properties. This kind of dogmatism naturally leads to controversy, which is why half a century later Holger Endres' art also seeks to shake off the corset of strict rules of abstraction. Endres' liberation takes place from painting to painting, whereby in a special way new references to the super-fathers of American abstraction are constantly opening up.

In an earlier text about Endres, art historian Margrit Brehm quoted the famous formula of minimal Artist Frank Stella: "What you see is what you see." This line of tradition is an important benchmark for all abstract pictures painted since, but it is also a demarcation line of the artistic field of perception that is being fought over. It was precisely from the European perspective that an artistic opposition formed to the dogma of the American minimalists and abstract painters, into whose family bonds the works of Holger Endres can be embedded quite well with their tendency to play with shapes. There are, for instance, the bright colored stripes by Günther Fruhtrunk, the striking wall paintings by Blinky Palermo or the stripe paintings by Daniel Buren, which were critical of institutions. Buren appropriated the aesthetics of the French boulevard with the striped awnings of the cafés and shops.

Holger Endres reopens the art history of abstract painting before our eyes and shows it being changed on walls and pillars. The painted ceiling supports are titled "08/ Magenta Black and White (Columns)" and were created site-specifically. They continue a series of paintings that have the same color composition according to consecutive numbers. The beginning of this series is a tribute to Kazuo Ohno, to whom Endres dedicated the first space-filling work, but here in relation to the "Butoh" dance from Japan performed by the artist. This adds a trans-disciplinary context of reference to the art of Holger Endres, which brings into play the conscious use of the body, meditative movements and the rhythm of regular application of paint. Endres always likes to go into the process of creating his paintings, because it is indeed meditation and the type of movement to be regarded as a time-based performance that underlie his painting as important components next to color and shapes.

Holger Endres paints his pictures with the highest concentration. Sometimes he even designs entire rooms with alternating black and white stripes on a magenta background. This principle of luminous backgrounds flashing lucidly between the black and white stripes is used in a similar way in many of Endres' paintings. What is striking about them is the lower end of the linear, vertical application of paint—the contrasting brush stroke, semi-circularly colored in, completes the stripes just before the lower edge of the picture in such a way that rhythmic wave movements are created here. In this way, the hues magenta, coelin blue, yellow or other color mixtures of the background literally come into play. This observation is relevant for understanding the shapes in Endres' latest paintings, which operate under the series titles "Miami Beach" and "Paris". Here the artist uses lightened pastel hues as a primer. Thus Endres expands the concept of his minimalist, abstract painting with a pop-cultural twist by re-appropriating and reversing his own principles of shape. In the series "Miami Beach", the semicircular striped ends suddenly change sides and mark the upper edge of a picture in the picture. They are now upward-curving garlands marking a blank space, on the left and right sides of which only thin black or white stripes define the boundary of the meta-image.

Holger Endres reports on the original motif of this latest series of works. As the innovation imperative of the art system theoretically dictates, this work, too, is based on irritation. For his small and large-scale murals of the series "Miami Beach", the artist has custom-glued together micro-cutouts. Using auxiliary lines, but not the meticulous purity of straight lines, and his own brush handwriting, Endres reduces the painting to a minimum of sketchy stripes. The outer frame of the picture and the painted border of the recessed image structure the painting and with it the empty space. Clement Greenberg would have enjoyed this

posthumously.

For his latest group of works, "Paris", Endres completely dissolves the vertical order of the stripe paintings. What remains is a wafer-thin line in the rectangle that doubles the outer frame of the painting, as well as a group of remnants of shapes from the previous painting series, reduced to the binomial number of five semicircles plus a quarter circle. These semicircles or "bowls", as the artist calls them, no longer form a garland, but float in the pictorial space, probably ordered by an unknown harmonic principle. They are reminiscences of the original idea of the painting, and are a newly formatted decoration of a painting aiming at maximum reduction and abstraction. In a variation of the series "Paris", Endres created three-part paintings, "Paravent" (2019). The resulting sculptural extension of the panel painting demonstrates the spatial dimensions of abstract painting liberated from the wall. The placement in space suggests the paintings' meditative context of production and perception. This results in paintings that, when viewed, immediately generate an indefinite longing. They act on the imagination like a magnet of desire.

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