

## REFLECTION IN ACTION

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The persistent repetition of what appears to be the same procedure in a physical or artistic activity or in one related to arts and crafts with the intention of making a work more profound or refined, of attaining movement or making a statement is not always easy in our fast-paced time. With the exception of high-caliber sports that demands the perfect coordination of movements and a certain feel artistic work might involve a preoccupation with issues and tasks that are looked down upon by mainstream cultural industry as obsolete and brushed aside without much further ado.

The modernist fallacy that something new must replace anything else that preceded it is widespread and has meanwhile come to resemble an automatism that leads to thoughtless destruction in the everyday struggle of suppression. With recurring regularity one or the other art form or art trend is declared dead.

Such a proclamation usually has to do with pure ideology or concealed wishful thinking. On closer scrutiny, the processes of cultural history show that something new initially joins something already existing. Subsequently, a more protracted practice unbiased toward the one or other would lead to insights informing on how further development, continuity and coexistence could relate in a meaningful way.

The concrete artist Fritz Ruprecht has spent several years working with a creative technique that allows him to systematically explore options, limits and transgressions on a formal and technical level, leaving diverse pictorial effects to a certain feel and intuition and a deliberately used element of chance. In his reflective way he always changes one single parameter in extensive working steps and studies the new effects in a number of works, often numerous ones. With this intense reflection in action (one could also refer to it as a systematic exercise) he is able to gather new experiences and insights that become more concrete when most subtly differentiated in the following works and condensed in paintings.

His approach consists of making slanted marks in various density and frequency on long stripes of surface material, cutting these stripes into narrower ones and then arranging them in a haphazard way. The vertical arrangement results in a columnlike structuring of the total image, analogous to the linelike structure in a horizontal arrangement. The added stripes appear to convey unknown codes that optically integrate with those on the stripe, or the adjacent stripe, producing overlappings and interferences. Since no one, even not he himself, can be familiar with these codes, since they are born of the principle of chance, the beholder is confronted with a pictorial total effect that resembles that of the calligraphies of foreign cultures or, for example, the quipu of the Incas. We project wideranging connections but we do not know their meaning that remains hidden even to the artist. This aspect of intended openness that immediately draws the beholder into the picture is a crucial element of Fritz Ruprecht's Ouvre.

For his works he uses mainly everyday, even 'cheap' materials that do not cost much. For a long time he worked with commercially available sandpaper with different grains and various types of paint for 'priming'. He produced the stripe-like markings by means of extremely thin sheets of metal whose oxidation process was integrated into the pictorial effect.

More recently, he has been using widely available types of paper: packaging paper, drawing cardboard in various colors and tissue paper. The slanted markings have become more sparse, giving way to a colorless wax with which he covers the whole surface of the paper; when heated the wax briefly changes its aggregate state. A material alienation entails when processes of chance allow the liquid wax to melt, penetrate the paper parts of which are scorched with a hot iron. Thus the basic texture is overlapped with a process of transformation and aging which also freezes once the processing ends.

The surfaces of the paintings appear to be segments without a margin. The slanted markings fall into a structure based on contrast, placement and proximity to groups, figures and sequences whose coherency and context is fleeting. Similar to tilting figures, there are various ways of reading them, depending on what the beholder proceeds from. The markings in, on, or in front of the constantly changing ground resemble stripes, slits or even blows as evidenced by the contingent scar pattern that emerges. This, once again, is indicative of the processual nature of their realization.

The spatial impact of these paintings that can hardly be overlooked, in particular of the large formats, is intended. In strongly defined architectural settings, such as the Wittgensteinhaus in Vienna or the gallery of the Austrian cultural institute in Prague, Rupprechter adapted the proportion and format of his works to given window openings or niches. Nevertheless, these paintings do not so much resemble a window with a view as a luminous shield that creates a spatial intensity through a sort of emanation in the zone in front of it.

A second way of reading them is that they allow us to divine a spiritual space beyond the curtain-like veil of the surface of the painting in a sort of virtual transparency.

A mental penetration of the many semantic layers of the picture surface leads us into an unknown era: past? - future? - permanent presence? The strangely, semitransparent veil of the surface sort of conceals a reflexive layer in front of an alleged space deep below where the beholders might see their souls or present state reflected. With such intense intuition the basic technique, the aimless reflection in action, in the practical exercise of creating the painting, is conveyed and transferred.

This results in structural affinities to Japanese art and cultural practices that Fritz Rupprechter knows from his own intuition and local experience: arching (Kyudo), calligraphy (Shodo) or other slightly refined everyday activities. His paintings thus invite us to pause, to relax, to draw new strength and compensation.

In some of his works one can note a certain reserve. These paintings evade quick optical perception by being illuminated or darkened. The contents are sublimated in this way and the beholder is asked to become more immersed in the paintings and

to experience their lasting effect. In this sense each painting reveals longer intervals from the process of approximation and selfanalysis undergone by the artist. In its intensity, the artwork becomes a source of power that gives off energy when it is looked at and also recharges itself.