

**COLOUR EUPHORIA – A FIELD STUDY**

7 March – 12 April

**Colour Euphoria – A Field Study**

5 painters from 3 generations from the beginning of the 20th century up to the present day

**Opening:** 7 March 2019, 19.00**Duration:** 7.3–12.4 2019**Artists:**

Tim Freiwald, Rupprecht Geiger, Daniel Grüttner, Peter Krauskopf, Robert C. Morgan

Colour, form and line are the three main constitutive components in painting.

Of these, the particular colour tone has the most direct and most emotional effect within the image. Tone is known to create the music, and the image acquires a warm or cool, tempestuous or contemplative expression depending on the composition of the colour tones. In painting, colour gives images their “sound” — just like tones in music!

There have been many attempts to define the specific expressive quality of colours — in Newton’s, Goethe’s or Runge’s colour wheels, for instance, or in Itten’s colour combination schemes. There has been a tendency towards pure colour painting in the visual arts since the 20th century — this is still a new field of research and expression, from cool analysis right through to colour euphoria. Colour is spiritual and sensual energy. “Painting is our emergence in a different place”; this statement by Franz Marc is quoted several times by Ernst Bloch in “The Principle of Hope”. Colour opens up to us new fields, new horizons. In this respect, our exhibition is a new field study.

We present works by five artists from three generations. All five of them had to — and have to — find their own way of dealing with the altered situation after the catastrophic failure of the euphoric departure in modernist painting,

On his trip to Tunisia in 1914, Paul Klee wrote enthusiastically in his diary: “Colour has me. I don’t have to snatch at it. It has me for ever — I know that. That is the meaning of this happy hour: I am at one with colour.”

In his “Colour Type Theory”, the analytical Bauhaus master Johannes Itten explores the phenomenon of colour as a question of existence and non-existence: “Colour is life, for a world without colours is as if dead.”

Then, in the USA, Colour Field painting — primarily with Mark Rothko — becomes a special type of abstract expressionism. Rothko saw in colour “tragedy, ecstasy and doom”; ranging from bright red, yellow and orange through to dark blue, green, grey and finally black. Likewise, painting is always a struggle for a form of existence, for parables offering insight into existence.

“Colour is a lust for life”, as the visionary architect Bruno Taut, initiator of the Crystal Chain Letters, wrote in 1920 in his “Appeal for Colourful Building”. His vision at that time was that humanity should sensitise itself via colour in particular and become motivated to do good. Bloch saw a possible utopia in the compressed expressive form in painting, articulating it thus: “There must be a self behind the applied colour, a hand that applies. An emotion travels through the hand that moves, inserting itself into the painting.” (The Principle of Hope)

Would this be conceivable today?

Present-day globalisation, with its expanding profusion of images in all areas of life, increasing

interdisciplinarity, the conflation of cultural and artistic forms, the international reception of contemporary art as a universal means of expression, and its use as a new, universal and global language — with all its exuberant forms of expression — represent a new challenge.

Just as there can no longer be universal scholars, like the scholars of days gone by, neither can there be, for the future, such a thing as one straightforward cohort of artists whose works will be preserved in the collective memory as the representative expression of the respective zeitgeist.

In the field of art it is less and less often the state-supporting museums and increasingly the major individual viewers and collectors whose reception and corresponding collections provide a complex reflection of the zeitgeist of a respective century in the form of a living configuration in a constant state of exchange. In this respect we see the fulfilment of Lessing's old, sagacious ring parable in our enlightened new age.

The challenge lies in facing the fact that in future there will no longer be a knowledge that is secure for the whole of eternity. We must learn to live with this. From now on it is we ourselves who have to develop the ability and learn to decide what is important, what is right, and what is worth preserving. This only works today if people have the courage to differentiate, and if they are open to considering the insights they have acquired themselves in debate with other people. From now on, the following, apparently absurd, principle applies: it is possible that the other person may be just as right as oneself.

What all five painters exhibited in the field study have in common is that none of them give up on trying — each in their own, very individual way — to find new perspectives, new colour gestures, new painting strategies. The struggle for truth, beauty, peace, happiness and love in painting since modernity therefore carries on through the war and post-war years and up to the present day. This leads us to suspect that utopia is indeed still alive, and that the avant garde is perhaps not dead yet after all.

The exhibition is focused on five painters — five positions:

We have the colour poetry of the oldest, Rupprecht Geiger; then, the concrete spatial creations of Robert C. Morgan, with his sensitive field studies on the reaction of light to pigment and metal; we also have the different colour gestures of the two younger painters Peter Krauskopf and Daniel Grüttner; and finally, the deconstruction of the painting in the work of the youngest artist, Tim Freiwald.

A luminous red is the dominant colour in the work of Rupprecht Geiger (1908–2009). He was one of the pioneers of German abstract art after 1945. As the son of the painter Willi Geiger, he was sensitised to light and colour effects in nature from an early age, and in 1940 he began teaching himself to paint on the eastern front. In 1941, whilst working as an official war artist in Russia, he wrote in his diary: "The possibilities are endless ... In the sad darkness of the war, red — the luminous evening sky — becomes a signal of hope." Initially an architect, his aim was to "build with colour"; the rectangular panel was by no means dogmatic in his work — he was much more concerned with the shaped canvas, the spirituality within the form. In 1949 Rupprecht Geiger founded the avant garde "Group of Non-Objectivists": ZEN 49 with, among others, Willi Baumeister and Fritz Winter. As an individual, Geiger increasingly withdrew within the brushstroke in his pictorial work.

A particular luminosity was typical in his paintings. He increasingly used phosphate colours, with their fluorescent pigments, and applied them with a spray gun. The luminosity of his paintings is fascinating. Of his favourite colour, red, he wrote: "Red is life, energy, potency, power, love, warmth, strength".

Hilla von Rebay from the Guggenheim Foundation promoted his work, for he had created the shaped canvas even before Frank Stella. Geiger later became Professor of Painting at the Düsseldorf Academy of Arts.

Robert C. Morgan from New York (born 1947) is a painter, art critic and writer; he combines clear geometrical forms. They seem to be on the same level, yet through the alternation of colours with different degrees of light absorbency, and through reflective, metallic pigment, they suddenly become bodies through which a beam of light passes — as in a labyrinth —, followed by the eye of the viewer. If the light hits the metal, it is reflected, suddenly touching the viewer with its lustre.

Robert C. Morgan builds light traps. As in classical icon painting, the eye is illuminated by the reflection and the geometrical shapes form bodies within a spiritual space — the work takes on a peculiar sacrality.

Although at first Robert C. Morgan's painting may resemble Minimal Art, the images are

differentiated from this by their intuitive painting technique: “In contrast to the colored ink paintings of Sol LeWitt the concept in my paintings does not remain static. Rather my paintings evolve from an initial drawing that changes along the way. My work is essentially intuitive, not mathematical.” The free intuition of Robert C. Morgan’s paintings means they remain free from any colour dogma.

The painter Peter Krauskopf (born 1966) is, unusually in today’s world, free from the fear of beauty. He creates — by means of a fully mastered canon — illusions of a moment of surprise by exploring the abysses between his colours. The Berlin painter layers pastose oil paints, one on top of another, before destroying them again through a wilful game of chance in an act of *va banque*, thereby revealing light reflexes and shadows cast within the interior of the painting.

For Peter Krauskopf, the errands between the head and hand of the artist, as well as the irregularities that arise from these, are an inner component in pictorial creation. Through the deconstructivist power of the spreading knife — which is very difficult to control — Krauskopf destroys the feigned painterly flow, unveiling his artistic process in so doing: the paintings that evolve in this way are the ultimate goal of a kind of painting that knows the power of its pictorial suggestion.

By contrast, Daniel Grüttner (born 1979) avoids all assuredness in his spontaneous paintings, which are limited to a few contrasting tones. Each painting is pure invention: lines, colours and forms drive each other tirelessly, at a breathless pace, onwards into a complete absence of stability and structure, whilst consistently avoiding the recognisable. The attitude of the drawing gives rise to energetic visual spaces in a gestural manner. In Daniel Grüttner’s work, abstract expressionism reverberates like a memory from a great distance. In the here and now, however, he is one of very few painters who have taken on painting in such an unruly and uncompromising manner — searching for the new, and without any willingness to oblige.

Tim Freiwald (born 1986), who took his master class under Thomas Scheibitz, is a deconstructivist colour painter. His paintings develop out of theoretical action and reaction. Like Fontana, who slit open the canvas, he saws up, dissects and scorches the support medium, before re-assembling it with paint, varnish, wood, synthetic materials, metal: “I want the paintings to be on the point of physical collapse, so that they can only be stabilised by pictorial forces of attraction.” The painting is a fragile pictorial structure; it appears to disintegrate into debris, line fragments, recesses, islands of colour, but is held together by the playful and highly mercurial spirit that characterises this kind of painting, as well as by the compact nature of the object-like body of the painting. The viewer’s gaze is steered, again and again, in different directions by reduced criss-crossing lines of colour — as enticing as they are enigmatic. Because Freiwald does not shrink from the destruction of the surface medium, pictorial beauty and violence stand in artistic opposition to one another; chimerical terror is banished in the artwork. This perhaps reflects the *zeitgeist*. From an aesthetic point of view, however, an anarchically Dadaist spirit lives on in Freiwald’s work.

In the work of these artists, the exhibition presents a broad field of pictorial positions from across the decades of the last century.

Constanze Kleiner, Stephan von Wiese