

Catalogue text for the exhibition

Leonhardi-Museum, Dresden

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Andrea Franzioch – „Abstraktion und Empathie“ (abstraction and empathy)

It was almost a hundred years ago, in 1907, when the architect Adolf Loos called in his groundbreaking essay "Ornament und Verbrechen"¹ (ornament and crime) for all ornaments in architecture and art to be abandoned. Loos, who by the way was student at the Technical University in Dresden, demanded instead a functionality hardly known until then in its sobriety and objectivity. When the young avant-garde from Kandinsky to Mondrian started a free, functionless experiment, they feared the denigration of their abstract works as purely decorative gimmick. But the young scholar Wilhelm Worringer provided support for marksmen by providing a convincing legitimation for abstract art with his programmatic work "Abstraktion und Einfühlung"² (abstraction and empathy) in the same year: the new tendency towards abstraction can be directly derived from ornamentation, from which "the purest will of abstract art is always revealed".

And so the abstraction of natural phenomena in "artistic creation", in contrast to the sordid "imitation instinct", results from the fundamental psychological need to defend oneself against the anxiety caused by reality. At the same time, however, the highest abstraction produces the style that is most perfect in its regularity. This thesis contradicts Worringer did not only comply with the prevailing aesthetic values of the time, but also the revival in recent years of a preference for painting. of neorealism.

A century later, we are faced with an artistic oeuvre that is the fruit of the this long process of testing and rejection of diverse varieties of abstraction is. The variations ranged from the radical emptying of the canvas in the suprematist "black square" of a Malevich, above the abstract American-style Expressionism and Minimal Art up to the nonfigurative Painting of today. With regard to Andrea Franzioch's work, the main focus is on Op-Art, as used in Great Britain by Bridget Riley or in Paris, among others. was represented in the association "Abstraktion-Création" with Victor Vasarely. The colour field painting of a Sean Scully or David Reed should also be mentioned.

¹ Adolf Loos: Ornament und Verbrechen, (1907), published by Adolf Opel, Vienna 2000.

² Wilhelm Worringer: Abstraktion und Einfühlung, (diss. 1907) Munich 1908

Despite these manifold tests, the circle of those who show understanding for abstract artistic positions is still relatively small. All too quickly, the apparent futility and futility of a pure form is perceived as an emptying of meaning. Completely contrary to the need of the artist described by Worringer for a detachment from reality, the eye of the beholder repeatedly urges for concretization. The viewer often reacts with astonishment and uncertainty, is denied the connection to a tangible objectivity.

Indeed, experiments with form and colour without any reference to objects, as we find them in Andrea Franzioch's work, not only require a high degree of concentration on elusive mental processes, but also a refined sensitivity for formal and colour refinements. In French art, the process of abstraction always goes hand in hand with that ornamentalization that Worringer defined as a genuine part of the creative process. The ornamental, sometimes a sweeping, flowing form, then again a filigree arabesque spinning away, is certainly triggered by Andrea Franzioch's view of nature and springs from her preference for fabrics and textiles, because Andrea Franzioch was a passionate fabric collector in her youth. She loves the soft, supple material, the endless pattern repeat, the richness of designability. So it comes as no surprise when some of their At first glance, the large-format works on paper are reminiscent of the reproduction of a pleat, a drapery or patterned wallpaper. At second glance, however, the focus here is on design condensation processes in which classical structures are transformed into a well-calculated metastructure.

In exploring the limits and possibilities of abstraction and illusion, the physical presence of materiality or reduced symbolicity, there can, indeed, be neither an object-relatedness nor narrative elements. They would distract from the essential, since it is a form of stylization that can only be perceived as structure and pattern when it is freed from the everyday context. But the eye calibrated for recognition is always looking for the object, instead we see blending image planes, of which we do not know whether they offer us a view, for example, as from an airplane onto a lonely stretch of land, or whether they suck us into the depths of space. Sometimes the strip of a curtain opens as in "Combine" (Fig. 8), so that we lose ourselves in the emptiness of the image space further and further behind the image, so to speak to the other side of the image. Sometimes a second pleated plane shifts in front of this emptiness of the picture space. On another occasion, countless, transparent layers overlap and fill the entire image field (Fig.7).

In French forms and structures there is always ambiguity, even the Image space is beyond a clear definition. And although on average through the red In the case of "Combine", a strip of fabric is formed in front of and behind it, i.e. space, the image carrier does not appear as the actual object. He persists in silence, while at the same time many of the color formations and the lattice-like arabesques suggest movement. Said empty space however urges itself sometimes in the puzzle game of looking at it as a negative form to the front, as it was on the is best readable with the paper cuts.

Three large-format works in terracotta red from 2003 are a reflection of Andrea Franzioch's first stay in Italy, in which the southern nature and the intensive colourfulness have left clear traces in her pictorial memory. The abstract configurations consist almost exclusively of stripes, which declines in all variations to be. Stripes with space between them form a grid, which together form a colour field without space between them. Vertical strips abut against horizontal ones. Those with slightly deviating, diagonal course direction join together to a zigzag pattern, some again swing out, take a curve and return in the arc to close to a circle. These rounded paths differ from the lattice structures in that they seem to form a volume, they have a spatial effect. The various forms in the picture oscillate between space-creating figure and space-negating, placeless'allover' structure. Again and again, individual forms are set in rhythmic relation to the overall structure in powerful bundles. For example, a terracotta-coloured field is overlapped by a collection of many small circles of black ink in the form of a link chain or a foam formation. Braidings and nets face closed bodies. Works like these are formed by variations in shape, wear and overlapping, horizontal and vertical entanglement and the change of transparency and opacity in color matter.

Other works on paper created from 2003/04 onwards leave much more room for the overall form: the broad brush strokes applied in diluted, glazing painting substance nestle together in sweeping paths and form a swinging, upward tapering Overall shape like in "Ohne Titel (Rock)" (figure 11). With slow, concentrated movements, the artist distributes the pigments mixed in a thin liquid state in long, even gradients so that they can be applied to the paper that densifies and darkens towards the edges. The repeating moment of the same painting movement in parallel paths basically represents is a minimalist approach.

In fact, we are dealing here with a brushstroke that represents nothing else than the painting movement and the painting substance itself. This brushstroke does not represent anything else and gives it colour, it is enough for itself. More precisely, this is a painting that makes itself the subject. It is surface and body at the same time, image and content in one.

Franzioch's works are experimental fields or rather fields of operation for the question of the basics of painting, of colour and form, surface and space, the relationship between figure and ground and, as Matisse said, the "eternal conflict between line and colour".

It is striking that Andrea Franzioch uses almost exclusively paper supports, including old blueprint paper from GDR times, on which architects drew. The thick rolls bear traces of discolouration. The nostalgic patina and smooth surface appealed to both the eye and the hand of the artist. The corrugated surface and the simple mounting between two wooden strips at the top and bottom remind of the ancient tradition of Japanese scrolls.

The paper cuts of black cardboard constitute an important part of Andrea Franzioch's artistic work. Usually it cuts out two superimposed boxes in such a way that each form is given a mirror-image double. She frames each of the two cuts for herself and then assembles them into a diptych. In the puzzle game with positive and negative, black and white form, each block of images doubles again imaginarily in the process of perception. Looking at the artist's oeuvre as a whole, it soon becomes clear why she reaches for the scissors, cuts up the material and thus apparently destroys it. Andrea Franzioch's works repeatedly touch upon questions of the relationship between surface and space. It builds rooms as a spiral stair-like structure. Her works betray architectural thinking. The paper cut also exposes space, opens the form, breaks up the surface, spatially. For the artist, unfolding the cut sheets is one of the most surprising moments in her work. What is revealed, which double silhouettes, which tilting figures open up here?

Even for Matisse, silhouette was so attractive because it represents a synthesis of line and volume, surface and space, of the graphic and sculptural. "Drawing with scissors,"

says Matisse, "Cutting directly into the paint reminds me of the sculptor's direct chisel strike."³

In fact, the papercuts are perhaps best suited to evade expression in the strict sequence and reproduction of any form. They are sober settings, a concentrated visualization of the 'drawing process', which, however, moves away from the handwritten. And so it is precisely in the paper cut, as Matisse has already exemplified in his groundbreaking portfolio "Jazz", a series of twenty "gouache decoupees", that forms are reduced to ciphers. He speaks of "ciphers of the universe", which released from nature in a radical process of abstraction lead to that ornamentalization where the inside and the outside, the emptiness and abundance appear at the same time.

Artists are always also researchers who want to get to the bottom of design phenomena. And so Andrea Franzioch perhaps most expressively visualized with the papercuts the cipher which, according to her investigation, represents a basic pattern of any abstract form finding. According to Andrea Franzioch, any form can be formed from an infinite number of triangles, but not from the square, for example.

One thing, however, must not be overlooked in Andrea Franzioch's work. Ornament as a geometric form, without the negative sound often attributed to it, can be seen in the best sense as a synthesis of fantasy and rule, of deviation and repetition, of spontaneity and control, of sensuality and reason. For Andrea Franzioch is always also concerned with sensuality and beauty in dealing with form, in Worringer's sense with "abstraction and empathy".

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³ Henri Matisse to his portfolio Jazz, Sept. 30, 1947, Edition Verve, Paris with 20 coloured prints of the papercuts.