

# MARC SCHMITZ

A NON LINEAR PERSPECTIVE

*„Bei dem Prozess des Malens geht es mir immer und überall um die Balance zwischen Ereignislosigkeit und Aktivität: Ereignislosigkeit als Stillstand der das Faktische betont, aber auch den Tod. Dagegen bedeutet jede Aktivität auch Zerstörung, für jede Weiterentwicklung muss man Sachen zurücklassen“*

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**THE PAINTINGS**  
selection 1995 - 2010

# PAINTING AS PROCESS

JÜRGEN SCHILLING

With his nonrepresentational paintings, Marc Schmitz takes a position emphatically distinguished from the prevailing trends in current painting and, at the same time, picks up a tradition that started at the beginning of the last century and has evoked controversial disputes up to the present. Ever since Kasimir Malevich set his Black Square on a white background – in his words, “[...] the naked icon of my time [...] What is royal in its taciturnity” – artists with various motivations have made attempts to place the hegemony of color above mimetic depiction. Malevich’s assertion that every painterly surface was “more alive than any face containing a pair of eyes and a smile. The face painted in a picture is a miserable parody of life and merely a hint at, a reminder of what is alive” is the culmination of a stance that began in Gustave Courbet’s work; by ennobling everyday subjects, Courbet made it clear that there must be no limits in regard to the “substantive” conception of a depiction. The 20th-century avant-garde’s turn away from representation in painting ultimately led, since the 1950s, to an artistic research program on the part of abstractly working artists who methodically took as their theme the materiality of the picture and the diverging processes of its production. The American Color Field painters – for example, Jules Olitzki and Larry Poons – and

the painters who were introduced under such terms as Radical, Fundamental, Analytical, or Essential Painting were interested in various ways in a reduction to essential elements of the medium, i.e., the substance of the paint and the manner of its application, its organization in the interior space of the canvas, and the character of the surface to which the paint was applied. To turn this flat surface that, to speak with the painter Maurice Denis, “is covered with colors in a specific order,” into a painting, it must become clear (if we follow Clement Greenberg’s doctrine of modern painting, which postulates the negation of illusionism) that the “the proper and true subject of every [...] art is precisely what is exclusively inherent in the essence of the respective medium.” That means that the conveyers of expression themselves embody a picture’s particular nature, its “content,” and its “idea” and that their effects want to be experienced in their function as object of depiction.

Mark Schmitz is equally interested in the demonstration of the body-like presence of paints, their consistency, their emotional aura, and their mutual influence. He applies them over each other in many layers, observes the behavior of each layer, and then modifies their appearance with renewed intervention until the result expresses his idea. The unequal covering capacity of viscous or thin paint mixtures has the result that, up to the conclusion of his work on the picture, the superimposed layers can shine through or appear as minimal traces at the edges. These shimmering transparencies – sometimes produced by adding turpentine – constitute pulsating vibrations and cloudy, burgeoning formations on the paint-soaked surface and relativize the initial impression of homogeneous-seeming levels. The monochromatic thickenings of the “skin” of paint are broken up, providing variety: over central passages, Schmitz pours small amounts of paint or turpentine whose dripping or splattering patterns owe their formation and extension to guided randomness. Such additions influence the pictorial space as

independently effective structures, as do the limited painterly interventions with which the artist exerts influence on their atmosphere. He places minimal signals like points and dashes with colors deviating from the basic color of the surface and he constructs complex draftsmanlike systems with figurative allusions; he scribbles hints at repetitive, enciphered lines of writing; and he notes with hurried brushstrokes short sentences like "I am still alive" or "change your life," as if he were not composing a painting, but conceiving graffiti for the wall of a building. With such fragmentary additions, Marc Schmitz interferes with the reserved stillness of what happens in the picture by leaving behind personal traces that go beyond the delicate chromatic reworkings that are the primary shapers of the surfaces. This design is determined by a considered, unpretentious disposition of the paints. Horizontal or vertical, sometimes blended or optically impenetrable solid masses of brushstroke sequences allow the viewer to deduce the painterly activity, which aims to reshape the material surface into an immaterial pictorial space.

A regular, harmonious rhythm in the use of the brush organizes the coloristically thrifty texture; the intentional but seemingly incidental interweaving of small but compositionally relevant details – like a small error that counteracts the overall impression, a supposedly inattentively executed scraping, or streaks in a contrasting color integrated in the course of a thick brushstroke – convey a feeling of controlled spontaneity in the context of a strictly rationally designed all-over composition. By directing the viewer's attention to confusing details of the pattern, Marc Schmitz underscores the influence of a processual approach that integrates the unforeseen and ultimately leads to the result. And thus, a black poured from the upper edge across the white of a canvas piles up, then streams in disorder in narrow, tapering paths over the vertical surface (#72 Bogdo Khan). These divide the space into segments and display the meaning of the white priming coat as an independently

effective color component. This is also true when Schmitz lets these segments stand in the vibrating spaces between the broad stroke of vertically extended dark paths or when light stripes assert themselves in the lower zones, rhythmically separated, vitalized, and brought into contrast with the dominant hermetic zones by fibrous drips of paints congealed on their descent during the work process.

Marc Schmitz's ability to make not only the material conditions, but also the painterly gesture at least hypothetically traceable adopts the viewer as an active partner, from whom he demands patience and empathy, but at the same time enables to sense aesthetic qualities and to participate in his own individual idea born of experience and inspiration, an idea whose energetic potential manifests itself in a manner that can be physically experienced. Schmitz confronts the viewer with a kind of painting that tells us about itself, the concrete inherent life of its ingredients, the criteria of its sensitive and mutable materiality, and its manipulability, a kind of painting that expands the field of perception by provoking the senses. In the interplay of coloration, luminescence, and structural qualities, the essence of a work is characterized and the statement formulated. Information on the changeability of color tones – for example, by applying patina – and a balancing nuancing of tonality that lets the picture surface breathe, as well as legible indications of Schmitz's planning and realization of the act of painting (of the temporality of his intuitively traceable gestures while applying the substances and washes and composing cold and warm contrasts) converge as knowledge about the work itself.

In the attempt to approach Marc Schmitz's work, a remark of Samuel Beckett's about a painter he esteemed, Bram van Velde, could be helpful: "He asserts. He notes. His means have the special quality of a speculum, they exist solely in connection with their function. He is not interested enough in them to question them. He is interested only in what they mirror." \*

# A NON LINEAR PERSPECTIVE

The conceptual artist Marc Schmitz posits within the sphere of contemporary art and unique dichotomy which oscillates between spatial vacuum, intrinsic spirituality and the dimensions of visual contexts in an experiential manner.

The artist has conceived of numerous series which denote a subtle referential system attenuated to his philosophical orientation, perspective and manifestations of intimate engagements with materials which correlate his fascination with transcendental states and spiritual animism.

His non-linear perspective is of key note, absence and emptiness are engaged with in the employment of materials and rather than acceptance and incorporation of sheer hazard, as may be supposed of his monochromatic oil paintings which indicate a tendency between abstract expressionism to sheer abstraction, the compositions are reasoned via a predominant intellectual latitude. The artist is concerned with dialectical subjectivity governing interpretations of "internationalism" and the caustic wake of mythologies: globalization and stereo-typological thought patterns which render analysis oblique

and unintelligible are discarded as Marc attempts to diffuse the predominant socio-political mores of society and defy conservative aesthetic enquiry.

“To transform capitalism...” remains a missive of the artist whom, ignoring the facile dichotomy of dualistic logic and rationale imbues his creations with a spatial reasoning divested of calculation. Intuitive perception appears to be the manifest signature of this exceptional artistic Nomad.

A pivotal point of departure from reason to non-reason is central to a successful and representative analysis of the artistic path of Marc Schmitz. Non-reason and intuitive rationale have been present for centuries, if not, millennia, in diverse non-Occidental cultures: the artists’ abandon of self towards a sincere embrace of this subtle truth in a plethora of simulacra is evident and sincere. We have forgotten what has been known.

Marc Schmitz attempts without conviction, depicting an impass of historicity, the frailty of the arrogance of the mind and deliberation with materials. Non-sequential, in a manner of speaking, the artist fragments preconceptions of medium in an informed and conscientious fashion. When painting, he tends towards the sincerest execution of abstraction, spontaneity, and achieves sublime monochromatic works bearing slight alphabetical/numerical codes without recognizable intentions. The variation occurs at the moment of inception. The exists no “cast” or adherence to styles which art historians or academic pedagogues insist to engender “justification” of practice and the absurdity of soluable form or mannerism.

An extenuation is observed as his spatial creations which ascend to hover above whatever passive enquirer in fact restrict the potential of trans-sensorial interpretations. The “moment” is altered, rendered acute due to the schemata of three dimensional forms being not only spatial, yet further, spiritual. The conical devices dictate

that the audience engages with a vista refined to a vertical perspective. The sky and passage of cloud, the sense of a vast, unfathomable horizon which all observe with less intensity daily is brought to an intimate instance with each individuals’ examinations of his creations. The materials and colour very, yet the intention of an analysis of unique perspective- undeniable in the visual context provided by the artist- remind of the loss of sensitivity of nature and intrinsic spiritual aspects of our existence.

The movement and content of visual imagery made possible by the advent of technological inventions are curiously erased by the artist, while the monumental structures which elect them to our collective conscious and unconscious visual experience remain intact. Visual reflex is a crucial consideration as the artist deploys a diverse vocabulary of media towards his sur-automatic and highly conscientious creations which travesty the norms of visual vocabulary, license and pattern.

Marc Schmitz investigates intuitive hierarchies and trans-cultural latitudes by way of a supple effluvium of the mind, the mind as a whole rather than psychological reasoning of subconscious/ conscious and equally facile dichotomies owning to a psycho-analytical adherence which may be ascribed to intellectual cowardice of this past centuries age of scientific advent.

Reminiscent of architectural, painterly and technological schools within the parameters of post-modernist interpretation, the actual course of the artist is emphatically ambiguous and amorphous, Schmitz is a chameleon rather than a hydra when it comes to formal applications and the subversion of visual interpretation demarcates and intuitive depth which has developed from intellectual sojourns which transcend self, boundaries of self, cultural identification and the entirely human frailty of our physical and societal mechanism

R. A.Suri



# 8 (Suisse)





# 21 (deep)





# 78 (dream)





# 56 (Girl with yellow sneakers)



# 38 (Pearls under my sleping mask)



# 51 (inside out)









# 67 (Berliner Blau)









\* (page 1) *„In the process of painting, my aim is always and everywhere to maintain the balance between uneventfulness and activity: uneventfulness as a standstill that emphasizes the factual, but also death. In contrast, every activity is also destruction; for every further development, things have to be left behind..“*

\* (page 3) *„La peinture des van Velde ou le monde et le pantalon.“* Cahiers d'Art, 1945/46; Samuel Beckett, Die Welt und die Hose, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1990.

MARC SCHMITZ

Born 1963 in Hamburg Lives in Berlin, Germany

Education

Philosophy at University of Hanover, Munich and Berlin Fine Art Academy Munich  
Media Academy Berlin

Exhibitions (selected)

2010 1st land Art Biennial Mongolia  
2009 Spaces N° 6, Richard Levy Gallery, USA  
2008 Spaces, Zendai MoMA Shanghai  
2007 10th International Cairo Biennale,  
2005 BIAP 2nd International Beijing Biennial  
2004 Busan Biennial 2004, South Korea

# THE WORLD VISUAL ART SERIES

MARC SCHMITZ

Exhibition at

BERLIN DAYZ

*Berlin frames*

Concert Hall Perth

Nov. 15th - Dec. 17th 2010

## THE PAINTINGS

All paintings of this series have the format 130 cm x 170 cm painted in oil on canvas. Some paintings have subtitles but in general they are just numbered. However for the artist there is not any chronological development in the production work that he is following on now for more than a decade.

- # 8 (Suisse) Oil on Canvas, 1995
- # 13 Oil on Canvas, 2006
- # 21 (deep things) Oil on Canvas, 2006
- # 37 (wolf) Oil on Canvas, 2007
- # 38 (Pearls under my sleeping mask), 2007
- # 42 (ARE YOU GOOD) Oil on Canvas, 2008
- # 50 (Blind face lucky heart) Oil on Canvas, 2009
- # 51 (inside out) Oil on Canvas, 2009
- # 56 (Girl with yellow sneakers) Oil on Canvas, 2009
- # 66 (EAA) Oil on Canvas, 2010
- # 67 (Berliner Blau) Oil on Canvas, 2010
- # 70 Oil on Canvas, 2010
- # 71 Oil on Canvas, 2010
- # 72 (Bogdo Khan 8th) Oil on Canvas, 2010
- # 74 Oil on Canvas, 2010

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