

## Intertwinings

Olaf Holzapfel's painting is characterized by strong, often suggestive spatiality that unfolds in his pictures coolly while excluding almost all concrete reference. A very interesting boundary phenomenon is lodged in this »almost«: On the one hand, this painting is indeed completely abstract, completely without mimetic relicts. And yet it evokes imaginary pictures that recall real, concrete, not merely formal spaces, although it is not immediately obvious what gives rise to this experienced association. It can be a certain feeling of space, a memory of a glimpse from a window – an impression that overlays the picture or proceeds from it, although the picture cannot be reduced to it. This seems like a condensed real substance, and yet the painting remains entirely what it is: something picture-like, two-dimensional with spatial components. It seems to be the color itself that constitutes space and simultaneously charges it with visuality in this painting.

Especially in certain types of picture, Holzapfel integrates formal, extremely reduced spatial schemata that aim at perception of the real. In »Winter« or the four pictures »Susanne geht in den Garten«, for example, a simple spatial scheme, reduced almost to emptiness, functions as a field of reference for the painting. »green lake« is similar, but clearly tends in the direction of landscape. But such Euclidean coordinates that stabilize the picture space are immediately undermined by the painting, crossed with hybrid color-spatiality that contradicts the mimetic grasping of space. The pictures seem like the radical simplification of the space in which the viewer himself stands, while at the same time they show it to be something completely different: a synthetic abstraction, intertwined in clustered multidimensionality. In pictures like »Schanze« or »Dir blaue Zuneigung«, such disparate dimensionality is carried even further.

This painting has internalized the hybrid; in painstakingly adjusted vagueness, it now acts in the footsteps of an analog designing, which it has yet recognizably shed. In a somewhat virtual way, it is nonrepresentative and builds up from that its friction, beckoning to a relationship with reality. Holzapfel's starting point is the emptying of a space of mimetic depiction, in order to occupy it with therein-intertwined, folded spaces driven forward out of genuine virtuality in a painterly and anything but formal manner.

This has a lot to do with changed understanding of reality, which is no longer structured in analog manner, i.e., in terms of principles of similarity and an order of temporal sequence. Holzapfel has developed an abstract language that carries discontinuity within itself. In it, abstraction is no longer »abstracted from something« or an artistic practice of reduction of something given. »Digital thinking,« writes Friedrich Meschede in an essay on current abstraction, »is based on the virtuality of several spaces and on contradictory temporal impulses. It cuts up a continuum into segments and fragments, which recombine anew. Decisive thereby is that a linear temporal structure of before/after is suspended. The analog sequence of information is suspended. Networks arise that [...] no longer require any ground.«<sup>(1)</sup> Meschede thus sees in contemporary abstraction a »structure with diverse components« that can function as a »mental model of a hybrid culture.«<sup>(2)</sup>

Indeed, Olaf Holzapfel's paintings are something like »abstracts« of the spaces of today's world of experience, shaped by image-generating and reality-generating mediality. Their nonrepresentational quality is fed by the factual diversity of visual worlds that are determined by »media pictograms, programmed and analog image systems, landscapes, horizontal ranks, unsynthesizable media, cuts, samplings, levels, spheres, and forms of thinking that are bipolar and specific in all aspects«.

<sup>(3)</sup> Holzapfel does not depict this, but takes it into his painting as an aspect of reality and as a structural principle. A kind of »groundlessness« that is also displayed in other work groups – in sculptural works as well as in computer drawings: »der Absolute Zusammenhang«, for example, is sampled computer drawing that organizes visual events as a spread without a center and yet condenses, without hierarchy, into a picture. Holzapfel, who also underscores the influences of electronic music on his work, once compared such an open picture unity, constituted by accumulation and disparate centers, to the experience of walking through an unfamiliar big city while a feel for its structure develops through diffusion as if from a swarm of visual experiences.

Perception thereby constitutes itself in nonlinear fashion, as in a crab's gait, or also »Seitwärts geradeaus«. That is the title of a new, two-part painting by Holzapfel. In contrast to perspectively structured spatial effects as in the aforementioned types of picture, for example, illusory depth here seems much less tied down, controlled by valences of the color space itself. A series of narrow, white, clearly contoured surfaces moves to the front, floats loosely in four vertically arrayed paths on a pale violet ground. Linear grids, also vertical, run through the picture field as if it were illuminated from several directions by spotlights with shifting focus. In such round, soft-edged shadings, however, hard changes in brightness intrude, and narrow stripes of white, unworked canvas even appear in the picture. A controlled collision of every spatial and pictorial logic. Such complex ruptures also show the degree to which Holzapfel is interested first and last in color and how spatiality can be gained from it. By placing color, he translates it: to a space of its own that radiates and no longer pursues any mimesis.