

## Das Gewicht einer Farbe - A Color's Weight

In Clara Brörmann's paintings, corporeality and abstraction are not opposites. On the contrary: the human body is always the central point of reference. Brörmann's paintings require a human counterpart who relates to them and approaches them dynamically in space. Rhythmically arranged forms keep the eye moving even when viewed superficially, but to grasp the paintings fully, just facing them frontally is not enough. Viewers have to walk around them and look at them from all sides, close up as well as from a certain distance.

Brörmann entitled her current solo show at SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY "A Color's Weight," in this way linking it to the title of her previous show at Whitehouse Gallery, "Anatomy of Color." Bodies have a weight, at least as long as they are subject to gravity. "A Color's Weight" can be understood literally, that is to say, physically, but also metaphorically.

The human eye actually does perceive colors as having different weights, as was demonstrated in a seminal 1974 study by neuropsychologists Elizabeth Pinkerton and Nicholas Keynes Humphrey. They found out that it is not just brightness that is crucial. As they wrote in their essay "The Apparent Heaviness of Colors" published in *Nature*,<sup>1</sup> red has a greater visual weight than blue, green, orange, or yellow.

Interior architects take advantage of such effects when designing spaces. Similar effects can be observed when looking at Brörmann's paintings; after all, they too open up spaces, spaces of color, spaces for play, spaces for thought, spaces that partially lead us beyond the paintings.

Brörmann's motifs are created using floating shapes, circles, arches, and lines positioned next to each other, sometimes overlapping. The results are geometrical, emblematic, often symmetrical compositions that almost seem interwoven. Theoretically, the paintings could be turned by 90 degrees or indeed 180 degrees, in either direction. Sometimes, Brörmann only decides

---

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Pinkerton and N. K. Humphrey, "The Apparent Heaviness of Colors," in *Nature* 250 (1974), 164-165.

at the end which orientation is right for a particular painting. The willingness to keep changing perspectives, to rethink everything, is the precondition for her painterly process as well as for the reception of these works. The artist regards paint primarily as a material with sculptural characteristics. She explains that she does not aim to design a flat picture; rather, she wants to create something almost sculptural. She works with pigments and oils, with acrylic binders, sometimes also with Indian ink. She applies the paints in layers so that the works actually grow into a certain three-dimensionality. She never mixes oil paints before she starts, preferring to use them as they come from their tubes. Nuances are created exclusively by the way she layers color fields on top of one another. This becomes clear when looking at the side edges of her works, or at those areas that she later works on with a cutter. Brörmann uses different paints, opaque oil paints or glazing acrylic binder mixed with pigments for her various color bodies. For a long time, she used acrylic binder mainly as a means to an end, applying it to the canvas, above and below paint to then later rip it off again, thus deconstructing her pictorial construction in a fragmentary manner. Nowadays, she integrates the acrylic binder as a paint in its own right, albeit a transparent one.

Brörmann's paintings emerge from a lengthy process where the artist is far from seeking perfection. Cracks that appear when the paint slowly dries, for example, or small flaws on a surface sanded with sandpaper are intentionally left in order to demonstrate "that there is life in it."

At the beginning of her studies at the academy, she still painted figuratively: human figures that the beholders could identify with. At some point the artist noticed that these were actually not necessary for expressing what she was interested in, that perhaps they were a bit of a distraction. She speaks of wanting to "create moments" in her paintings, and that she feels it is wrong to think the physical and the spiritual separately. The openness of abstraction is required to ensure that these moments also resonate individually with the beholders. Clara Brörmann's abstraction is one that always refers to human beings, both before and behind it.

Text: Beate Scheder

Translation: Wilhelm von Werthern

Exhibition at Schwarz Contemporary, Berlin 2024