Stefan Pfeiffer
Terraforming

Opening: 6.5.23

The forms and lines that traverse the canvases of Stefan Pfeiffer seem like grooves dug into the viscous paint. An electric screwdriver intervenes, as it were, between hand and paintbrush; a heavy and cumbersome intermediary, it restricts the freedom with which the hand might be guided.

By in a sense submitting himself to the motor function of the machine, Pfeiffer thwarts the immediacy of the painterly gesture, though he consciously allows this free rein in his spontaneous and sketch-like coloured drawings, which are to be exhibited together with his oil paintings for the first time.

In the intuitively formed drawings, some compositions are determined by chance, though these can become a standard or limit, when an arrangement of forms or surfaces on sheets of paper are then transposed onto a canvas. This creates a frame or, one might say, a sort of anterior choreography for the coloured lines, themselves at times seemingly endless, whose various tracks are drawn by the electric screwdriver, without further preliminary sketches or planning.

It is in this way that the abstract forms and colours arise, establishing various levels of interpretative possibility, without prioritising any particular reading. The title, *Terraforming*, offers an associative framework that provides a view of the earth from above; one might be reminded of maps or thermal images, though the constellations of irregular, flowing forms can also be read as a glimpse into microscopic worlds.

We only return to the macroworld when a metal installation, hung from the ceiling, reminiscent of a party garland, evokes the danger that it might fall on us 'from above' (in the German: *von oben herab*, the title of the work) like aircraft parts or space debris. This play between lightness and heaviness is also to be found in those pictures, which, in their luminescent colourfulness, produce an almost transparent effect, such that they do not disclose the feat of their own creation directly. The relief-like structure of the picture's surface is only made sensible, when, by the incidence of light, moiré patterns emerge.

Those who approach Pfeiffer's work in dead seriousness, seeking unambiguous clarity, will certainly be somewhat duped. Frank Stella said, 'you see, what you see'; Stefan Pfeiffer might say: 'what you see can always be something else'.

Ludwig Seyfarth
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