

Thilo HEINZMANN

Artforum,

Thilo Heinzmann at neugerriemschneider

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Thilo Heinzmann, O.T., 2022, oil, pigment, and glass on canvas, acrylic glass cover, 28 3/4 × 32 5/8 × 3 3/8“.

Thilo Heinzmann
neugerriemschneider

To the tired old refrain of the death of painting—or, to get even more specific, the death of gestural abstraction—one need only utter two words: Thilo Heinzmann. If forced to categorize his work, one might hesitantly call it a child of Abstract Expressionism, but in truth Heinzmann’s canvases don’t really look like anyone else’s. Rather, these slabs of frore complexion trace a processual narrative of fluidity and flux out of the snowish ether that forms their foundations and through which ribbons and reams of color break. Were the sky white, and light composed of darkish hues, these paintings might be the documentation of celestial phenomena. Alas, they leave us without any real astral or geographical plane by which to orient our musings, so we must construct our own centralized perspective out of these surfaces of paint, pigment, and tiny shards of glass. Most of the paintings in Heinzmann’s recent exhibition “Playing Slowies” (all works 2022) are large, even monumental, overtaking the body. All are titled O.T., for Ohne Titel, or Untitled. This

self-conscious play on wordlessness further accentuates, perhaps, the ontological nature of his enterprise. In any case, no titles are needed; language, with all its inadequacies, always interferes. In each piece, white is the predominant colour, and the unbound pigment Heinzmann uses gives the paint a rugged texture when viewed up close. Some sort of underpainting is often apparent. In one specimen, I detected shades of the lightest blue, yellow, purple, and pink occasionally breaking through the surface, where thinner shades of white had been applied. On top, often in the centermost parts of the works, darker hues, coalescing into thicker swaths, emerge: here, deep dark purple; there, a fleshy pink that elicits a sense of wounding or tumescence. Great slashes of curvaceous lines give shape to the overarching white that otherwise threatens formlessness. In some canvases, the gestures are more frequent and more severe than in others; these compositions elicit a harsh melody rather than a soft hum.

Some smaller works, displayed behind glass—not on the wall but affixed to metal stands—more clearly revealed how all the paintings were made. One showcased more profusely the tiny tooth-size morsels of colored glass that, in the larger canvases, one might have mistaken from a certain distance for splotches of paint. The painting's main formation was enunciated in glacial blues, stretching horizontally into a hornlike structure, its "cranium" area erected through a brighter white impastoed onto the canvas, then leveled down with slight lacerations, as if made by a pencil eraser.

So much thought, consideration, and feeling goes into the creation of these surfaces that the effect approaches the sculptural: an imposition of form that conjures a presence to be encountered. Heinzmann's paintings hint at dimensions of the otherworldly, exposing the limitations of our world and bringing to the cusp of consciousness what poet William Bronk once deemed "the world and the worldless"—place unburdened by the necessity of location.

— Travis Jeppesen

<https://www.artforum.com/print/reviews/202304/thilo-heinzmann-90302>

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