

Color Works

Babette Krimmel:

in: *Anita Stöhr Weber, ungemalt*, Freiburg 2004, S. 64-70

“Here according to legend, Apollo flayed Marsyas after beating him in a music competition, and hung the skin in a cave from where the waters are flow.”

Xenophone

The memory of Marsyas' fate is evoked if you immerse yourself in the fragile, hypersensitive color works by Anita Stöhr Weber, which – on closer observation – are color skins stripped from the body of the picture.

The artist dismantles traditional panel paintings by using a specially developed process to detach the color from what hitherto has been considered a necessary backing. In doing so a new – admittedly gentle – identity is created, as in this reduced form of the picture there is a concentration on color, which is thus lent an absolute quality. The color-work thus created consists of pigment and binding agents alone. The paint has emancipated itself and the color is effective in, and through, itself.

By stripping off the color section the artist renders visible what was previously invisible, by literally turning the painting inside out. The painting's inner skin, which before being removed lay between the paint base and the outer skin, invisible to the observer, is, following removal, turned outwards, thereby becoming the visible side, whereas the original outer surface of the painting is no longer visible to the observer.

With “St. Paul 3, Ercolano hell” you can immerse yourself in the monochromatic colors and probe the fine nuances of the tonal values. The painterly structures which are visible to the senses are created by the imprint of the surface qualities of the original color section. The imprint of the missing grounding is still present mnemonically in the depiction of its grain. The traces of the “lost form” and not the traces of the artist's signature are what create the painterly effects. For Anita Stöhr Weber painting is not a gesticulatory painting of color, but a structural application of color, a treatment with color. It does without a frame, and yet the color work created is nothing other than its color reproduction.

“St. Paul 3, Ercolano, hell” is hung over a filigree metal hanger in such a way that in the top third the color section hangs double. In this section the skin of the picture becomes its own foil; it joins up with itself. This produces a stronger visual impression of the colors and makes them stand out against those in the single layer. Presentation in this way is only made possible by the distance created between wall and objet d' art. In this way the color cloths take possession of the room – and even more: as a result of their gentle consistency

they move if caught by a breath of air. A two-dimensional color cloth has become a three-dimensional picture object.

The two transparent, whitish works dating from 1994 are among Stöhr Weber's earliest color works. They reveal the slightest trace of white and stand out for their enormous delicacy and transparency. This clearly highlights the fact that the wall functions as the frame and allows the observer's eyes to feast on the shaded white – of the wall, the color skin in front of the wall and the double hanging. These color works are very much in the tradition of white-in-white painting, which surfaced in 1918 with Kasimir Malevich's white Supremacist composition – instances of differences in white they offer a true perceptual delight. A comparison of the two transparent color works reveals their differences and as such the uniqueness of each work of art. "Transparent, weißlich III" for example reveals a different texture and more strongly accentuated, fine streaks of a more intense white, which appear to be woven in. The borders and edges of this color work also reveal more traces of color and wood from the former counterpart. Even though the picture's texture remains open the frameless color work is far more enclosed than in "Transparent, weißlich II". The impression of a tactile quality is heightened, suggesting an association with textiles. By contrast, the "Weiß 98/2" made in 1998 is more evenly colored. Greater use was made of white pigments, which seem to be more bonded into the surface, resulting in the impression of transparency yielding to one of opacity. What is exciting about this working white is the contrast to the red color particles on the sides, reminiscent of signs of the origin of previous skins taken off the same backing. These traces of the production process are part of the pictorial work and document Stöhr Weber's attention to the act of artistic creation. Her oeuvre bears witness to the fact that she enters into an intense technical dialog with the media used in making a picture, a dialogue which, however, serves an ongoing intellectual concern with the topics she finds pressing. The stringency in Stöhr Weber's oeuvre is evident in the recent work "WA R2". She lowers the large-format color work from eye level and positions it closer to the floor. This increases the impression that the work, which is in-between picture and sculpture, is an object in its own right. Being at a lower level the hanger, as the picture's frame, becomes more prominent and reminds the observer of a towel. The color structures are now greatly reduced. It appears that the decidedly artistic style of using the color/paint has given way to efforts towards greater objectivity and homogenization in the color scheme. The artistic expression concentrates wholly on the pure, uninterrupted flow of color. Here paint and with it color has wholly come into its own.