

Matthias Groebel

The halftone dotted paint suggests that some kind of printing process was used, but it doesn't look like screen print, more like plotter, or maybe a kind of inkjet? However, the works are dated 1990/91, so it wouldn't add up chronologically – in the early 1990s there were no large-format color plotters yet.

Already at the time of their origin, the paintings raised questions about their technical feasibility when they were shown. Today, prints on canvas are common; the question *How was it made?* no longer comes up right away. But in the paintings at Schiefe Zähne, traces of a plotter *avant la lettre* can be seen, like the tip of an arrow of time pointing to a present that has now granted the wish for such a device after all. But then again, it's different from the one you can actually see at work on Matthias Groebel's website. Because, as he says, machines are never built for artists.

He himself had to invent the machinery he uses, and as with every invention, this meant putting together existing parts in a different way, contrary to their intended use, drawing on a wide range of scattered technical expertise. Programming the color application posed a particular challenge. When Matthias Groebel devised the machine, he didn't want to approximate a realistic image by additive color mixing, the way four-color printing works. What he wanted instead was something like a painting device, a technical brush, allowing full control of the color space much in the same way as in painting, ultimately allowing him to work as he would in oil, from chiaroscuro gradients to creating an individual palette.

The use of machinery places the paintings in the realm of concrete art, specifically as, to summarize Wikipedia, *creations of a direct sensory impression, which ideally can be described mathematically and be automated – detached from symbolic elements, with a focus on the interplay of form and color and an interest in the exploration of color.*

However, this hermeticism, inherent in many works of concrete art, is actually seen as a flaw by Matthias Groebel, which he solved by selecting seemingly random images from television, which remain open to interpretation. This is in keeping with concrete art, also with regard to the psychological or unmediated sensory experience of color space. But another psychological aspect is introduced as well, a kind of narrative that viewers are tempted to extrapolate from the stills that offer the possibility of recognizing/interpreting/conveying them. This is even more pronounced when the images are hung in series, practically asking to be strung together into a narrative (the Story of the Hand).

The color space – and that means Groebel's painterly choices – together with the plot, which defies a definitive conclusion, create a peculiar presence of these images. This is also thanks to a familiarity with the TV image, portrayed here in a kind of liquidity (the image of flow, derived from the moving image). This familiarity is met with the pictorial moment, that is, the punctum of the image. In this case the moment Matthias Groebel chose from an endless stream of footage from

early commercial television imagery, a moment which intrigued him to such an extent that he reassembled it, actually reconstructed it, with the help of his machine.

And so, while the technical process of Matthias Groebel's paintings has been realized or normalized into the present, their content or subject has vanished into the past. Although they are now 30 years old, this renders the works extremely topical, perhaps precisely because two arrows of time intersect in them, one pointing to the future, the other pointing to the past. Where these two cross is in fact: Now (albeit in a fluid way).

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