

Helmut Dorner

19.1.–2.3.2019

Light, the giver of all presences, is the maker of material, and material is “seen” light. Everything made by light casts a shadow, and the shadow belongs to the light. There is a threshold: light to silence, silence to light – an ambience where there is the desire “to be” and all kinds of things can be expressed.

(Louis I. Kahn)



Badende, 2018

acrylic on wood
126,5×104,8 cm

Since the 1970s, Helmut Dorner has been developing a stance toward abstract painting than one could describe using aspects of the Light and Space Movement and at the same time the objectness of Minimal Art. He was already invited to participate in the documenta IX in 1992, and his works are included in museum collections such as the Centre Pompidou Paris or the Kunstmuseum Winterthur.

In Dorner’s painting, light and space are central aspects that in each of his series play with the material qualities of color and the picture support. He grasps color as “factual materiality” that, depending on the light and spatial situation, can permanently alter a picture’s consistency. While Dorner’s preceding series of “oils” and “varnishes” played with the alternation of opacity and transparency, his new abstract acrylic painting forms a sort of “membrane” between innumerable layers of color that subtly shine through the visible surface and the actual ambient space—reinforced not least through the picture support made of wood that almost appears as an architectural element.

Dorner's paintings are "light and time places," created in a specific situation and simultaneously creating a situation through the interplay between viewer and the concrete location. This collapsing of time and space becomes evident above all in his multipart works that actually make the "space in between" a part of the work. In this regard, Dorner's painting is a play with presence, the here and now, the moment "that could always remain the way it is," and at the same time with the alterability of all things.



Kaktus Gelb, 2018

acrylic on wood
124,2×102,8 cm

Biographical note

Helmut Dorner, born in 1952, studied at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in the 1970s. In 1997 he exhibited at the documenta X in Kassel. Since 1989 he has been professor of painting at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste Karlsruhe. His works are included in renowned museum collections such as the Centre Pompidou Paris, Museum für Neue Kunst, ZKM Karlsruhe, Museum Winterthur, Switzerland, Arco Fundacion, Madrid, Museum Reina Sofia, Madrid, and the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.

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