

Franziska Klotz | Cataloge Ölregen 2019

Gerald Matt

1)

“I’m happy when I’m painting. I like it.”

(Joan Mitchell)

Franziska Klotz (born 1979 in Dresden) is a painter. For her, painting is not a medium “among many”, not at all; it is the medium in which she puts all her energy, time, heart, and soul into and she expertly explores its potential. Colours, the interaction with them, their effect and materiality are her world (her subject). Her painting is in the most real sense of the word a handicraft; she is hands-on, paints with her fingers, palm, she presses, rubs, smears, literally transfers her energy onto her paintings, and they acquire their intensity and allure from her state of mind and gestures. Meanwhile, she loves oil paint, its sensuality and materiality.

Even when she refers to events, landscapes or portraits with the tools of painting, she transforms her reality into fields and forms of colour. When she investigates the world, its existential questions and distortions, for example in her painting Dresden, it is always primarily about painting and its potential. In her works it is not reality that finds a medium, rather Franziska Klotz seeks the themes for her painting to explore the possibilities and the impact of painting itself, as in Matsch or Kathedrale. Thus, the titles of her colour spaces report on image origins rather than explaining the resulting image-world, and they are reminders of the initial reality, which is already dissolving through their painterly gestures and application of colour.

She is not interested in narratives, historical events or their authenticity, but in atmospheres, sentiments; not in the concrete singular but the universal. Regardless, she is committed to subjective resolution and not to superficial objectivity. Her painting is not based on certainties, does not seek to enshrine experiences or memories, to help reality to its reflection. Instead of closed, final, self-explanatory image-worlds, Franziska Klotz creates open, ephemeral areas of transformation, invites us to replace the old world with a new one and to indulge ourselves in its range and dreams of colour.

It is a painting that mistrusts simple attributions and clear answers, and instead of spaces of reality, in Musil’s sense, it wants to create areas of possibilities, and colour zones of perception and reflection, freed from appropriation and functionality. Her dynamic and powerful paintings reveal a process of liberation, a separation of reality, subject and original inspiration that occurs in the act of painting, even when she relies on photographic templates for many of her works and connects them with real incidents through their titles. In her works, she consistently disentangles colour and form, the line and motif, the act of painting and

subject. Simultaneously tender and rough, she submits her gestures and her inspiration to colours.

She tackles nothing less than the irresolvable contradictions of figuration and abstraction, mimesis and pictorial invention with her painting for the sake of painting. The subject matter of her painting is painting itself, its perception and reflection, which gives it the inherent power of annihilation and resurrection. Thus, her paintings oscillate between completion and dissolution. The processes of becoming and decay are united in the entity of the painting. Her often largescale paintings claim a place, their place in the world and, without fail, catch our eye.

Franziska Klotz operates with abstract forms that intensify temporarily, almost elusively on the canvas into a hint of reality and a title; a world of colour, seemingly incomplete and already disintegrating. Her paintings downright suck the gaze of the viewer with their swirls of colour. Whether it is a colour field, colour layering or a brush stroke, our eyes insist on an image detail and they relax and befall a state of elusive meditation in the space between image and viewer, which, however, immediately yields to a strange restlessness just as the viewer delves into the act of painting through his wandering gaze, over expanding fields of colour and brushstrokes that set the painting in vibration and tension, simultaneously suggesting a possible transgression of the painting's boundaries. This contradiction between contemplative tranquillity and concentration, between dynamic power delivery and action, gives Franziska Klotz's paintings their specific energy and strength. Her work connects expressiveness, physical signature, vitality and also the contingency of the painting act with the analysis and the

research of the potential of painting and colour. Her art is corporeal, active, sensual and earthy.

2)

Remained, no pleasant images.

*“Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no COLOURS of green fields;
But huge and mighty FORMS, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.”
(William Wordsworth, The Prelude)*

Similar to hazy dream images lingering after waking up that are more feeling and intimation than narrative and association, Franziska Klotz paints and leaves the original intention behind. Even her references to nature, landscapes, people and events hustle toward abstraction, losing themselves in configurations of colour and light and in the gesture of painting.

In her paintings, objects and figures appear, configure themselves to their images, always remaining a memory rather than reality, strangely ephemeral, already dissolving during their emergence. Application of paint and lines blur rather than accentuate the reality generated by photographs and postcards. Even her Mumienportraits cannot be personalised; they show templates and masks, function more as still lifes than human faces, losing themselves osmotically between figuration and abstraction, as types. As their landscapes, their Greek-Roman facial appearances seem to be beyond place and time; templates and not individuals. Even in these seemingly figurative works, the real world is upstaged by her world of

*colour. This process of levelling and disintegration continues in her work *Tür*, in which she layered many portraits unto each other.*

The titles of her abstract image-worlds are reminders of the genesis of the image; they do not describe the resulting worlds. They refer to a reality that is already dissolving in abstraction and colour. The motifs become part of the paintings idiom, the transformed raw material for its colours; the original references become arbitrary and secondary. It is almost as if the intention to turn the subject to a painting evaporates, gives way to its interest in colour and form, dissolves, flows with and onto the colour and is blurred.

This intention, to succumb to painting in the act of painting, to create a new order with colour as a weapon is also reminiscent of recent nature and landscape painting in Germany (Gerhard Richter, Anselm Kiefer) and in England (Ian McKeever, Peter Doig).

Dresden, as one of her most impressive paintings is titled, refers to the tragedy of her birth city, which was almost wiped out by the 1945 bombing. However, like in many of her other works, her motif of choice is narratively and historically ambiguous. She creates a personal, atmospheric space of colour and sentiment by adding other images, such as the burning oil fields of Kuwait, and subjecting it to the rules of her painting, which investigates the painting process and is shaped by it. The original event that the painting is titled after becomes a metaphor.

*Reflections on Franziska Klotz's work repeatedly attempt to establish an ideal affinity to Pieter Bruegel, the Elder, as in his *The Triumph of Death* and its imagery of death's victory over*

*life. As opposed to Bruegel, who draws his scenes of violence, destruction and death from his actual environment, paintings of Franziska Klotz like *Dresden* evade objective historical attribution; they configure themselves out of collective and personal experiences into an autonomous composition and image-world that transcends history paintings.*

*Through her title *H3P04*, she is referring to the chemical formula of phosphoric acid, which was allegedly used in the bombs that brought death and devastation to Dresden—a rumour that is not historically credible. Here, too, she removes, in a concrete and abstract way, the boundary between reality and imagination in favour of colour and material. This way, a new reality is established, far from place and time, universal, subjective, fictive and yet true; as in *Fellers (Vicious Companions)* or *Studie 3. A world behind reality, a no man's land, preferably vague and out of reach; landscapes between water and land, brightness and dark, near and far, a forest, rain, field, wind, mist; incomprehensible, imagined places and events.**

*In her paintings, Franziska Klotz travels through time and space; the newly created worlds cover an ever dissolving reality similar to a veil—as in *Basilikum* and *Edelweiß*. Her landscapes and abstract chunks of colour are not contradictory; they emphasise the complementary contrasts of reality and dreams. The concrete ideas for paintings yield to the unreal evolution in the process of finding images until they disappear in the complexity of the image structure.*

Franziska Klotz gives her paintings not just a spatial but also a temporal dimension through layers of overlapping colour and sets memory trails of performative occurrence. She places things simultaneously in the distance and upclose

through shifts of distance, layers and condensations of colour, seamless transitions; she disembodies and transcends them, makes them unreachable. There is a metaphysics of sorts of the microcosm, like the one we find in Georges Seurat. Tiniest particles and traces of colour that, up-close, form their own world and merge to a new order in the distance, which in this macro perspective, are reminiscent of the light and colour worlds of William Turner.

3)

No beginning and no end

*“There was a reviewer a while back who wrote that my pictures didn’t have any beginning or any end. He didn’t mean it as a compliment, but it was. It was a fine compliment.”
(Jackson Pollock)*

In Franziska Klotz’s practice, the elimination of the boundaries of painting and other media takes place exclusively within the painting. Her play with primary shades of colours and their variations is musical, the act of painting as performative action is the subject matter of the painting. The composition of the image and the traces of the painting act, the brush strokes and the marks of trickling paint do not follow a visible plan but result from the spontaneity and the intuition of the painterly process. Thus, painting is the medium that allows Franziska Klotz the greatest artistic freedom.

Colour exists for, and through itself, it is freed from serving nature and reality in this capacity. It draws its authenticity from itself and exists courtesy of the sentiment and conscious decisions of the painter. It determines all the relations in the painting. Colour is everything.

With seemingly messy colour interventions, she attempts to lift the pretty appearance and to save the painting from the danger of a monotone and illusory balance. There is, like in Struktur or o.T., no beginning and no end. Everything seems to be becoming and decaying at the same instance. Her paintings are transitory, they can, or rather they must be further elaborated.

Traces of reality manifest themselves, colours overlap like thick veils, landscapes dissolve in weary mirrors, and filthy eroding layers of soil leave a touch of broken worlds; their disappearance is already included—as in Fellers (Vicious Companions). Her play with shimmering fore- and backgrounds, overlapped layers of colour that reveal more than they conceal are reminiscent of Sigmar Polke’s chemical experiments, which set intuition in place of certainty in their psychological spaces.

Her painting is time and again oppositional. Rows of alternating lines, as in Homes III, pasty applications of paint on coloured surfaces push concentrated colour and its simultaneous abstinence into each other, submit to continuous changes of direction through lines between fluid surfaces and condensations, they put a withdrawal into the interior of the image with the urge of colour to reach over and beyond the painting into constant opposition. Eruption of light next to dark clouds, traces of the equalizing white and the beguiling yellow of light, cool tones of blue, blends of brown and green, overlapping colours, intermediate areas, marginal traces of colour, brush strokes and shadings, deliberate smears of paint, layers of depth achieved by fields of colour, pasty marks, drips, splashes of paint form her opulent painterly vocabulary and vouch for her expert handling of colour as material. Especially her large-scale formats allow her to concentrate

on the process of painting and colours. Recognisable brush strokes and continual overcoating demonstrate “pure painting”. Layered, into one another shifted colour fields create unstructured spaces between enlargement and fragmentation, between surface and depth. Colour fields are accentuated by brushstrokes done by hand, spatialised through the pasty application, in order to, finally, dissolve in hazy materiality.

The shimmering colour fields and iridescent applications of colour, alternating between thin varnish and pasty abundance, cause fluttering moods of light and sentiment, which reminds me, for instance in Matsch, of the painting of Claude Monet. The paintings of Franziska Klotz clearly show the extent to which colour is light. Her rhetoric of colour poses a contrast to the ideas of Phillip Otto Runge on the difference between colour and form. Those do not differentiate between abstract, musical or literal painting.

Franziska Klotz does not operate with either/or. Colour is form, and form is also always colour. Colour is simultaneously music and narrative. Ultimately, her work is specially attractive and evocative through the dialectic between “imploding” figuration and “exploding” abstraction, the latent antagonism of light and colour, the white of the canvas and the conquering colours, the tension between a retreat into the surface and the expansion into space, as well as the combination and the contradiction of guiding calculation and liberating emotionality.

4)

Epilogue or a short afterword

*“It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible.”
(Oscar Wilde)*

Even as they free themselves from our reality and its representation, thereby attesting to the autonomy of painting itself, Klotz’s paintings do not solely relate a purely artistic world and the abundance of its colours and forms, but they devise a fading dream of a tangible world. Franziska Klotz’s image-worlds are neither stable nor permanent. They are precarious, in flux, simultaneously coming and going.

Franziska Klotz consistently and unswervingly continues her path. Thus, her refusal of definite classification and to subordination to an intrinsically modern teleology, belong to her artistic qualities. Since her paintings have their own authority, acquire their own reality and are not dependent on something else, but work exclusively for themselves; they are a critical response to the contemporary barrage of images and the associated fight for the prerogative of interpretation.

The French philosopher Jean Baudrillard, during his work on diverse historical forms of simulants (imitation, production, simulation), constituted the simulacrum of simulation as the dominant element of the contemporary society, determined by mass media. Characteristically, the distinction between image and copy, reality and imagination has become impossible, and it has fallen prey to the general absence of referentiality for signs and images.

This enables to pose the following question regarding Franziska Klotz's radical confrontation with the world and nature of colour: Is painting itself the reality? Is it—loosely based on Baudrillard—its own simulacrum, something that has no relationship to reality anymore, referring only to itself?

Franziska Klotz refuses all appropriation through artistic trends and their superficially political claims and requirements. Neither ideological guidelines, nor an ethically motivated frenzy of regulation determines her artistic thought and action. Her homage to colour is her contribution to experience something of the world's secret in the confrontation with the visible.

The works of Franziska Klotz constitute an essential and independent contribution to the rediscovery and celebration of the enchanting and infinite potential of painting.