

Monotony

by:

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It seems counterproductive for an artist to put forth the concept of "monotony" to describe his own works. This is especially the case at a time when the art market serves up ever more colorful, shrill, and iridescent specimens that ostentatiously try to catch our attention. Quiet and reflection, so closely connected, seem to steadily dissolve in the tumultuous floods of media and information which have become increasingly more difficult to process. A reconsideration of values and their categories from the sole vantage point of materiality, or a questioning of apparently familiar conditions, as deducible from objects themselves, seems a difficult and indeed fragile enterprise. - How, then, is one to deal with the concept of "monotony" with respect to the works on display, and their context?

The word "monotony" comes from Greek and means "one-toned," i.e. based on a single tone. It refers most directly to a musical quality, but in common usage has a far wider application. In everyday speech, it dismissively implies "uniformity," "boredom" - in short, a lack of multiplicity and imagination. As a result, one easily forgets the priceless qualities that this concept possesses; for it implies not only a single factor, but rather a concentration of all possibilities into a dominant basic value. Scientifically exact observation confirms that the absolute purity of a single tone or color value does not exist, for everything is in oscillation (as sound waves or light waves) and is hence affected by the "overtone" of neighboring tones. Even monochromy, which is so frequently exploited in modern painting and which basically plays around with the idea of the visual purity of a single color-tone, is based on the principle of multiplicity in unity. Thus, monochrome painting is itself the most visible proof of the manifold, multifaceted interplay of several color values, reflected even in the seemingly determined, "one-dimensional" color-tone as an explosion of simultaneous, visually apprehensible color values. This phenomenon opens up the supposedly uniform visual image (or musical chord) to reveal unforeseen dimensions, thereby expanding the monotone chord into one that is many-voiced. It is this movement that needs to be retraced in Jürgen Faust's works. Nevertheless, what remains essential in these works is the original material itself, whose very nature gives rise to these possibilities of sensual experience. Nothing in these works ultimately remains in its securely predetermined place; rather, the phenomenology of presence - of the visual as well as the corporeal presence - is repeatedly questioned, challenged, and understood in context.

Jürgen Faust reduces his works and installations to a few elements: his lime panels in upright format, whose hidden turquoise only vaguely shines through, primarily thematize basic ideas of monochrome painting. In his exclusive use of copper sulfate and lime, Jürgen Faust draws upon two materials which come from the reservoir of nature and which now enter into a new "liaison" with one another. By allowing the substantiality of the materials to speak for themselves, he compels one to reflect on the condition of what are ultimately mundane materials. He does so, for example, when he piles lime, coal, glass etc. into large cones, thereby emphasizing nothing other than their appearance, their materiality, and their morphological structure, weight and density. These accumulations, along with the exclusivity of the material cones, nevertheless

provoke thought about aspects of their industrial fabrication and the constellations of things as apparently realized through alchemistic knowledge. While principles of series, of the logical connection or contrast of natural substances, is exemplified and demonstrated with scientific sobriety in the material cones, Jürgen Faust's lime panels constitute themselves out of a different thought, although both the materiality and the alchemistic mixture are preserved. The lime panels take these aspects far beyond their material bounds and form a new pictorial concept.

The history of the development of monochrome painting is long and of essential importance to modern painting. Starting with Russian Constructivism, with Malevich's composition *Black Square on a Black Ground*, pictorial thought has been revolutionized. The dismissal and derision of this development does not seem to have faded away even today. In concrete art, in essential statements of the De Stijl movement, and finally in Minimal Art, the pure qualities of color -its unisono, monochrome qualities - play an exceptionally important role with general regard to the way we reflect about seeing. Artists such as Malevich, Barnett Newman, Donald Judd, Ad Reinhardt each offer different approaches which nevertheless exhibit structural similarities. In modern painting, argues Clement Greenberg, the primary means of orientation is nothing so much as flatness.

Flatness is above all a structural necessity if the artist's "touch" is to recede, if everything that is individual is to be avoided and only the artwork is to speak from out of its form and structures. Flatness allows above all for an authenticity of the work in itself, leaving the artist behind. The flatness of which Greenberg speaks is meant as something factually given. However, the works of Jürgen Faust, which appear nearly monochrome, his lime panels, which tend increasingly toward white, thematize horizons very different from that of flatness. A perfectly lucid colorfulness is achieved primarily through the repeated layering of the color surfaces, which arise as though through a gradual development, and which can be repeatedly reworked. Underlayers seem to shine through, alluding to hidden, covered things yet to be broken open. In this development of the panels layer by layer, the processual nature of the work becomes visible, and its temporality turns into matter. The fact that, with time, optical changes take place in the panels (especially through the copper sulfate) as the result of chemical reactions, furthers the aim of inscribing the factor of time into the picture panels.

Jürgen Faust also succeeds in suspending this temporality; he likes to mirror both sides of the same thing by opening layers up, scratching them away, disturbing or destroying them, and (as in an installation in Zweibrücken) reconstituting the debris and forming it again into a picture. In a recycling process of this sort, structures of perpetual return obeying evolutionary principles (that is, principles of further development) become clear. Jürgen Faust ensures that material is not lost, in both a conceptual and a substantial sense. He respects and sensually visualizes the basic physical principle of the preservation of all material substances. The aspects relating to "image-construction" thereby gained are above all visual thought-constructs, rather than purely sensual occurrences. Jürgen Faust's works - whether his panels arranged in groups, which in their seemingly fortuitous combinations in fact follow a very strict logic, or his new video installations, which deal with the real and the virtual reality of images - all provoke reflection about contents and concepts.

Jürgen Faust's works operate with minimal, silent and unspectacular means. His video productions, too, forgo obvious decodings and easy handling. In this sense, his works may also be monotonous. However, they use this outward monotony in order to access a richer, many-voiced interior, a spectrum of color values that is the sum of a single, concentrated aspect. Jürgen Faust wishes the aspect of monotony to be understood as a means of expression that provokes the viewer while heightening the intensity of the works. The concept of monotony opens itself to a multiplicity of visual and intellectual interpretive approaches. It offers the chance to rediscover and understand contexts. The objects and constellations themselves allow for these levels of understanding. The "touch" of the artist naturally recedes. Nevertheless, his works are everything but monotonous; however, should they be so, then only in a very sensual way.