

About the work

Christoph Schirmer's idea of painting is one of an optical matrix, far away from the old peep show principle. The colour material can be seen as relief on the surface supported by a flashy (loud) psychedelic colour chart, which intensifies the aggressive throb (pulse) of the picture.

Instead of a contemplative look into the depth (the core) of the picture, the retina of the viewer (beholder) is being aggressively attacked, similar to the optical flickering effects of the advertisements on Times Square or the brightly whizzing pin-ball and slot machines of Las Vegas or of bowling halls.

Already in the 1990ties the colour as material plays an important role in Schirmer's art. He "deposits" acrylic colour in a constellation of streaks and bubbles on the canvas, which concentrate to nets and colour tangles. He even exaggerates Jackson Pollock's method of Drip-Painting by concealing the view into the depth by the battle of the colour material. Pollock, too, avoided (shirked) a fine picturesque quality by using the daubed, partly materially deposited colour on the canvas, but on such places, where watery colour was sucked in (absorbed) by the canvas, highly sensitive pictorial zones emerged (came into being).

In his recent oeuvre Schirmer reduces this radical material output of colour. Even though the acrylic and lacquer coating still shows raised spots, the painter tends to use pure zones of colour in a pictorial way. Thus picture zones, vibrant and full of subtle colour nuances develop, which become manifest in the work in a new three dimensional tension. This pictorial three dimensionality is counteracted (opposed) by emblematic figures and motives and by their two dimensional effect (impact, impression) and their contents. In spite of this Schirmer's intention is an abstract composition, in which the figuration and the purely pictorial sphere naturally coincide or are opposed in dialogue. The artist belongs to the generation for which a compatibility of diametrically opposed modes with one another is natural. (for which diametrically opposed modes are naturally compatible.)

The academically looking separation of figure and abstraction belongs to the history of Modern Art, in which the narration and the theme of the human figure were of anachronistic content. Neo Rauch, Daniel Richter or Franz Ackermann are international examples, who manifest these free relations in painting. Like them Schirmer reports in a complex, pictorial cryptogram on everyday life, youth culture and the social pressure, which industry and advertising impose upon society. In his pictures of 2002/03 Schirmer still criticizes ironically the social situation of western civilisation in his paintings, such as in his series: Beautiful People – The Have Nots. He shows symbols of capitalistic and aesthetic power (status): clothes, cars, designed hifi equipment, trendy bars and Gucci girls versus the tristesse of the No Future Generation on the verge of poverty, criminality and suicide.

In his recent work the artist wants to concentrate more on the structural – compositorial challenge of the picture itself and he wants to interweave the representational motives more clearly as pictorial cipher (code) with the abstract zones.

Christoph Schirmer's position as an artist joins directly and sensitively the iconography of youth culture and everyday life with the complex challenges of the medium art per se (itself.)

by Florian Steininger, Curator BA-CA Kunstforum, Vienna, 2005.

Translated by Dr. Solweig Leeb, 2005.