

KOOL KILLER

In "Lorem Ipsum", his fourth solo show at Galerie Thomas Fischer, Marcel Frey presents a series of new paintings that he created by folding canvases and treating them with spray paint. The folds result in geometric shapes and surfaces which, interrupted by intermittent lines and curves, appear like fragments of a larger whole. While the eye attempts to reunite the individual visual elements with one another by way of imaginary turning, rotating, and re-sorting, the content of what is represented—similar to the dummy text "Lorem Ipsum," which is always just a form, but never a support of concrete information—remains unclear.

The works might reveal similarities to one another but present themselves again and again as idiosyncratic structures of stable disorder with a coherence all their own. This intrinsic contradiction generates an enormous dynamism, for like the gaze through a kaleidoscope we are given the impression that each canvas shows a temporary state of displacement, as if all the individual parts would fall into place if the canvas were turned 90 degrees or upside down. In this sense, the images are also states of fragile entropies and not fixed compositions that demand a formal evaluation, as the exhibition title seems to suggest.

Those who look closely notice that despite all commonalities in the series, differentiated images result that contain multifarious considerations on the surface, overlapping, space and composition, line and contrast. While some works seem like a motif fragmented behind a prism, others are reminiscent of the 1980s textiles and wallpapers designed by the Memphis Group, where short and scraggly lines and shapes tumble about like rubber worms or colorful sugar sprinkles tossed up in the air. Other works with their powerful contrasts recall the play of light and shadow as familiar from abstract black and white photography or photograms. To continue in this line of thought, the gray zones and fraying at the edges of some of the lines, due to the drizzle from the spray cans, appear like the rough grainy quality of analog photographs. The material qualities of spray paint also make it possible to make statements about the temporality within the images, for the density of the paint application shows the speed at which Frey worked. There are thinner and thicker, faster and slower lines in which hesitation, acceleration, and changing directions during painting left their mark.

The use of spray paint, in contrast to paint that is applied with brushes and other tools, also raises associations of graffiti and especially tagging, an uncomplicated means for the mass spread of sprayer logos, in a sense their identity. Just like Frey, they work spontaneously and quickly, and yet what remains is of a captivating permanence. Similar to these publicly applied signs, often overlapping with one another and thus dissolving to the point of abstraction, Frey's pictures with their fragmentary quality raise the question of a supposed meaning, but at least the signs in urban space "mean nothing," as Jean Baudrillard appreciatively noted in his 1975 essay "KOOL KILLER ou L'insurrection par les signes" (the very first scholarly treatment of the subject of graffiti). "Invincible due to their own poverty, [they] no longer [denote] anyone or anything." (Jean Baudrillard, "KOOL KILLER, or The Insurrection of Signs," trans. Iain Hamilton Grant, in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* [London: Sage, 1993], 78.). It is precisely here that Baudrillard recognizes their power, for these signs, according to the title of the essay, are literally rebellious, their "function . . . is to derail common systems of designation" (Ibid.) And maybe it is exactly this derailment that makes Frey's new works so irresistible: they are able to appear as closed systems and still can evoke the disturbance of

a supposed instability, that with every viewing once again invites us to imaginarily reorder content and form, like the solution of a sliding tile puzzle, and to offer numerous possible perspectives in this way.

Katharina Wendler

Marcel Frey (b. 1980 in Mönchengladbach) lives in Berlin.

He studied at the State Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe and was a master student under Silvia Bächli. Solo exhibitions of his works have been held at the Städtische Galerie Karlsruhe, the Kunststiftung Baden-Württemberg in Stuttgart, at Bruch & Dallas in Cologne and at the Centre Culturel Franco-Allemand in Karlsruhe. His works have been included in numerous group exhibitions in such institutions as the Simultanhalle, Cologne, the Museum Biedermann in Donaueschingen, the Kunsthau Baselland and the Kunstverein Freiburg. In 2013 and 2014 Marcel Frey was awarded grants from the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the state of Baden-Württemberg for the Cité International des Arts in Paris.

Galerie Thomas Fischer

Potsdamer Str. 77-87, Haus H
10785 Berlin +49 30 74 78 03 85
mail@galeriethomasfischer.de

