

# **experimental BERLIN**

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POST-POSTMODERN POLYPHONY - Experimental Art in Berlin  
Essay by: Mark Gisbourne, September 9, 2017

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All the old clichés about Berlin as a city motivated purely by the art of Expressionism have all but dissipated. Today the regenerated and unified City of Berlin sings many different songs and contains artists that capture and articulate a rich diversity of visual and aural resonances. As a result the current exhibition seeks to reveal some of the different provocative aspects of the city's new experimental insights. Whether we speak of installation or differentiated cross-sensory interactions, the new forms of experimental engagement in line with contemporary thought, re-articulate and hybridise what earlier investigations left unresolved.

For example the works of Renaud Regnery have engaged anew with the monochrome, the grid, and with the abstract informel with its language of lyrical and gestural presence. At the same time there is counterpoint of reproductive and entropic simulacra and post-war affichiste formlessness.<sup>1</sup> However, that he is French is clearly connotative, with inevitable monochroic allusions to Klein, yet this is mediated by the fact that he has chosen to extend the language of modern painting into an integrated expression that fuses together the processes of making and its subsequent presence.<sup>2</sup> Thereby he extends for the viewer a sense of phenomenological and embodied, as well as a temporal aspect of an immediate visual art experience.<sup>3</sup>

The artist Claudia Chaseling similarly innovates and creates an extended environment in her painted works.<sup>4</sup> The issues of space and temporality are continually present in Chaseling's art that often expand upon the physical viewer relationship to floor, wall, and ceiling. The common emphasis is placed on dynamism and elasticity and is manifested through a dialectical relationship between the aspects that are figural and/or abstract. There is a visually intense use of line and gesture that thereby intensifies and brings an explicit sense of the colourful and explosive unitary graphism to her work. As in the work of Henning Strassburger, who uses the mark, the gesture and the line, though to different effects and similarly innovates and creates an extended environment in her painted works. The issues of space and temporality are continually present in Chaseling's art that often expand upon the physical viewer relationship to floor, wall, and ceiling. The common emphasis is placed on dynamism and elasticity and is manifested through a dialectical relationship between the aspects that are figural and/or abstract.

There is a visually intense use of line and gesture that thereby intensifies and brings an explicit sense of the colourful and explosive unitary graphism to her work. As in the work of Henning Strassburger, who uses the mark, the gesture and the line, though to different effects and outcome.<sup>5</sup> There is a hint of narrative in his use of titles, but this is undermined by the emphasis placed upon a diverse variety of digitally inspired marks, operative gestures and pictorial fragmentations. The power of his use of line has the effect that it diminishes any sense and immediacy of the painterly, placing his work in a pictorially unique median space that operates between drawing and painting.

This interstitial aspect forms a further dialectical sense that is often extended by his use of other

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media (video, sound, or sculpture) as accompanying installations. The counter sensory is also present and/or implied in the mixed media works of Nathan Peter, whose use of the cut and the fold has frequent Deleuzian connotations.<sup>6</sup> Issues of fragmentation and material translation often play with the illusion of the object and ephemerality. Again we might see in his works the shredded state of old modernism and a new vocabulary, that is to say by using materials commonly associated with art and its history (canvas, linen, bitumen, enamel and lacquer), they have been turned to create a set of transliterated material affects. The language of their former use transposed into non-predictable new uses and experimental forms of expression.<sup>7</sup>

And the sense of material displacement and sensory transposition is also central to the work of Gregor Hildebrandt, who uses earlier post-dated materials from aural expression and re-mediate their use within visual culture.<sup>8</sup> In using cassette and videotape and their boxes, vinyl records and related magnetic materials, Hildebrandt creates a unique (sometimes allusively figurative and at other clearly abstract) form of a highly personal and synthesised visual language. In this respect and in several other ways he is able to create an expressive and revived sense of contemporary synaesthesia. It is a characteristic of this exhibition that displacement and transliteration of former conventional materials and idea have driven forward the general sense of new experimentation.

These varied approaches are both the measure and encapsulation of what we are tempted to call a new form of visual innovation, an expanded set of material practices—or an approach constituting a new language of post-postmodern polyphony.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide*, New York, Zone Books, 1997, pp. 177-178

<sup>2</sup> For Yves Klein and the monochrome, see Sidra Stich (ed.), "From the Blue Monochrome to the Void," Yves Klein (Ludwig Museum, Cologne; Hayward Gallery, London; Reina Sofia, Madrid), Cantz Verlag, 1994/5. For a discussion of grids and modernism, see, Rosalind Krauss, "Grids," *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1986, pp. 9-22

<sup>3</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," *The Primacy of Perception, Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy*, Evanston and London, Northwestern University Press, 1964, pp.159-190

<sup>4</sup> Claudia Chaselung, *Spatial Painting*, Berlin, Verlag für zeitgenössische Kunst und Theorie, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> See Henning Strassburger, *Bleaching is Teaching*, Bielefeld and Berlin, Kerber Verlag, 2017

<sup>6</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibnitz and the Baroque*, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 1993 (and all subsequent editions)

<sup>7</sup> For interviews and discussions of the artists' works consult [www.nathanpeter.com/texts.html](http://www.nathanpeter.com/texts.html)

<sup>8</sup> Christoph Tannert (ed.), *Gregor Hildebrandt. Urlaub im Urban*, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Stroemfeld Verlag, Berlin, 2016.