

TRUE COLOURS

PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS BY KATHRIN RACZ

As the title of this exhibition suggests, the very first thing that strikes us when discovering the work of Kathrin Racz, a Swiss artist living and working in Berne, is indeed her palette composed of intense colours applied in multiple layers on either canvas, wood or paper.

In her artistic education, she was notably guided and inspired by Johannes Itten's color theory. A renowned expressionist painter, designer, teacher and writer associated with the Bauhaus school, Itten developed the *Farbkreis* (colour circle) in 1961, which has become a standard reference for generations of artists. It combines the three primary colours yellow, red and blue, the three secondary colours green, purple and orange, as well as the six in-between colours. Cross-references to Josef Albers and Max Bill, and their influential educational work, obviously come to mind.

All these colours and tones find themselves united in various ways in Kathrin's works, be it in her abstract landscapes, the semi-abstract portraits, or the other more figurative works. They are being presented for the first time in Belgium, after many exhibitions in galleries and institutions in Switzerland, France and Austria since 2004.

Her works appear to be simple at first sight, with a direct impact on the eye and mind of the observer. However, they are often the result of a longer process, carried out in multiple stages, until the artist reaches a convincing outcome. Over time, the paintings and drawings start to reveal their "true colours", that is to say, their deeper meaning or their hidden face. The starting point for her artistic works are deeply human observations of our life condition in an ever changing environment.

The vibrant colour fields of the series "*Jetzt*" (2015-2016) mark the end of a period in which the artist applied multiple layers over her older paintings, to look into the way we live with our memories over time. Sometime we may compile them in a way that older ones get sidelined, leaving us with the curious question to "guess what was before". As a fresh start after the end of this process, with a related exhibition in Berne, the optimistic "*Jetzt*" series, shown here, was painted on blank wood or canvas.

The immediately appealing "*Blind Summit*" series of 2020, painted with oil on recycled wood boxes, previously used for electric installations, is based both on a Scottish street sign and a personal life experience. These subtle compositions are meant to show us that we all proceed towards the unknown, unable to glean behind the next peak we may be trying to reach.

The "*Heads*" (2019-2020), on canvas or paper, project us even more deeply into the human mind. They address complex and deeply intriguing issues, such as our family ties, or the thoughts that may keep us up at night. All of these portraits leave us somewhat puzzled, some of them being a bit obscure and almost worrying and others more peaceful and optimistic.

Finally, her color pencil drawings "*En attendant*" were made in April 2020 during the first lockdown period, which we all remember as a new and totally awkward situation, but also as an unexpected time to pause, reunite and consider what may come next.

What characterizes all the works by Kathrin Racz is a highly developed skillset of using forms and colors for a very subtle expression of her thoughts and feelings. The paintings and drawings shown in this exhibition are both intriguing and comforting, which is a lot to bring to us in these strange times.

Text: Robert Klotz

More information: www.kathrinracz.ch