

“Concepts without percepts are empty, percepts without concepts are blind.” Immanuel Kant

Uwe Wieczorek

Hanna Roeckle’s pictures present a plane as a plane, paint as paint, and painting as painting. They are divided into adjoining rectangular panels of different colors, separated by visible seams. The composition of the pictures thus coincides with their physical arrangement. Each plane functions as a model, perceived as an individual that is clearly distinguished from its neighbors. This ties in with the artist’s practice of working each panel separately.

It is above all the colors that make images out of these pictures. Although they are subordinate to the physical layout of the picture, they still stand in lively contrast to it because color optically tends to transcend delimitation. Roeckle’s method involves meticulously working her picture planes with paintbrush and other tools until she has achieved the desired result. That also means repeatedly applying and removing her paint. And when she does, clear traces of the painterly process remain, guided not by a hand that gesticulates nervously but rather by a calm serenity. Nonetheless, the effect upon the eye is lively and refreshing, thanks largely to the choice of colors, which consistently gravitate toward cool hues. In this coolness, we sense a tendency to keep the intrinsically sensual and emotional nature of color in check through the control of a form-giving spirit, through the control of order and system, rectangle and module.

Accordingly, Roeckle occasionally uses photographs of minerals—scanned into the computer, vastly enlarged and therefore pixelated—as source material or sometimes only as inspiration or optical confirmation of an idea. Cool, stringent, and constructive: these properties go hand-in-hand with a discerning sensitivity to the complex balance between nuances of color and their configuration. No matter how the artist assembles a network of individual panels to form a picture—often after prolonged study and deliberation—the result invariably yields a subtly calibrated composite.

Practical considerations regarding what constitutes a picture have led to the development of clear-cut conceptual underpinnings for Roeckle’s working method and means of expression. This is clearly reflected in her paintings. Her titles also take a conceptual turn, as in the series Xoana, Askan, and Faro. The titles are not arbitrarily chosen but are an indication of subject matter. They refer expressly to something beyond the pictures themselves, to something historical and contemporary, real and metaphorical, and whether these references apply to our own or other cultures, Roeckle’s works cannot be confined to Max Bill’s definition of concrete art, according to which works of art come into being “on the basis of their inherent resources and rules—without external borrowing from natural phenomena, without transforming those phenomena, in other words: not by abstraction.”¹ The sources on which Hanna Roeckle draws do not spring exclusively from art and its means, nor does the meaning of her pictures exclusively reference art and its laws. There is something in front of them and behind them that lies outside the autonomous play of color, form, and material. Viewers are not called upon to seek more than they are shown. It is quite enough to concentrate on what is visible, on the constructive and—both figuratively and literally—edifying beauty of every single work.