



Duane Zaloudek
«Nomad Songs»
Oct 26 - Nov 30, 2013

From a distance the images of Duane Zaloudek look like white surfaces. Maybe it is because these paintings still assume an aura of the intense and slow process of their production, maybe it is because we are so astonished that this should really be purely white pictures and want to make sure our senses do not deceive us - but remarkable here is that there is something about these austere canvases that strongly attracts our attention. There is a somehow physical attraction that makes us move closer to them. Coming nearer reveals drawings in barely visible lines, shimmering in different nuances of colours. In approaching the paintings we make acquaintance with an essential aspect of Duane Zaloudek's work: perception.

Since 1967 Zaloudek has been concerned with the physiology of vision, especially with ideas relating to sensory inhibition, and the implication such ideas hold for the technology of painting and spectator-object relationships. The works in the current exhibition cover the time period of the last three years. Their extremely reduced stimuli confront the beholder with his own vision and the self-conscious awareness of the physicality of seeing. Even with a concentratedly seeing eye delving more deeply into the image does not lead to a definite solution of what one sees. As Mark Müller put it when first beholding Zaloudek's work: «Do I see what I see? Did I follow the lines? His? Mine?» The artist aims at a physical-visual experience and the question which visual actions and reactions are possible to extremely low contrasts.

The process of painting his watercolours is slow and thoughtful, even meditative. Zaloudek applies several acrylic layers of gesso before drawing a set of lines by using very little pigment, here mostly gray, rose, tan, blue and olive green. These he then treats with a fine brush, using a tiny bit of water. While related projects examine the phenomenology of vision by experimenting with light, e. g. the installations of James Turrell which leave the eye no object to focus on, Zaloudek explores vision with the instruments of paint, canvas and the white-walled gallery, progressively minimizing colour and value contrasts.

In Eastern philosophy and Zen the void is not empty, it is fulfilled. Accordingly, white as a noncolour fascinates Zaloudek because it contains all other colours. The viewer is invited to sit down and become immersed in the paintings by tracing the lines with the similar unhurried gentleness and deliberation inherent in Zaloudek's way to paint. Paradoxically, within what appears at first sight to be a rigorously reduced palette, a rich spectrum of colours emerges in response to meditatively focussed viewing. In everyday life the senses are overloaded with input, the brain over-determined with a focus on one object after another, all this having a constant impact on what we are aware of, how we perceive. «Nomadic» implies a rejection of subordination to the extent of this impact. Through Zaloudek's artwork one at once has the chance to experience awareness and physical stimuli separatedly - a reduction that might potentially evoke an expansion of consciousness.

Janne Noll