



Michael Toenges
«Painting»
Oct 29, 2016 - Jan 7, 2017

Michael Toenges, born 1952 in Bayern (D).shows his newest works in his first solo exhibition at gallery Mark Müller.

As can be guessed by the title, Toenges' works lead us on the quest of finding answers to questions, that have been asked in the art world for at least a century, yet have never been completely answered: What and why is painting? When is a painting finished? Or in Toenge's own words: „When is it just a pile of fucking paint and when does it become more?“ Those are questions, that are as much unanswered as the mystery of the human brain, in which for whatever reason consciousness developed even though it's just a cluster of cells like the liver.

It is therefore not surprising that Toenges' work depict the act of painting itself, with the traces of manual work always visible and comprehensible in the thick and pastose layers of paint that are applied by scrapers, brushes and by hand. The resulting three dimensional surface changes with light and shadow, becomes alive and shapes landscapes with mountains and valleys. Treasure maps on the hunt for the perfect piece of art, in which large single areas of roughly mixed oilpaint are linked by more subtle elements of linear scratch marks or paint directly applied from the tube that bring the whole painting together.

Painting over and under, destroying, building up, smudging, scraping off.

Toenges' paintings seem impulsive and spontaneous, but are created in slow intervals inbetween which the artist takes time to step back, watch and reflect the work. He usually just works on one painting at the time, lets it speak to him, adds, removes and lets himself be led intuitively from the memory of earlier and hunches of forthcoming layers. This might be why his paintings often appear unfinished, as if time had stopped in the middle of the process. Neither we nor the artist can explain why the works have been deemed completed at this point. All we can say is, that they are definitely not a pile of fucking paint anymore.