



Patrick Rohner
«Realgar»

Three large horizontal format paintings form the framework of the exhibition «Realgar» at Galerie Mark Müller. The thick layers of paint, mixed using linseed oil and pigment on hardboard, have formed the main material of Rohner's complex multi-layered paintings for two decades now. The paint is applied with a palette knife in a process that often lasts months, if not years, and in which they are subject to various forces. Rohner uses pressings, layerings, and treatments with palette knives, brushes, and paintbrushes to leave the material on its own, subject to physical laws. It reacts by slipping, breaking, clumping, and flowing. Deposits, paint runs, grooves and currents emerge, contributing to the formation of a structure that grows sculpturally on the support. Thin, fluid paint makes its way towards the bottom, disappearing sometimes in the lower layers, moving through already applied fissures and reappears elsewhere. The picture surface is a complex structure of layerings and gaps. The processes that the material is subject to, as well as its reactions, recall the geological phenomena and mechanisms of nature that Rohner observes and documents in his surroundings, the Swiss canton of Glarus.

Introducing a new element to his repertoire of techniques, undissolved, dry pigments are used in a sand-like way in these works, forming local clumps depending on the surface structure. Furthermore, in the exhibited works the treatment that takes place at an advanced stage in the process is here partial, while in earlier works the entire surface was treated equally. This leads to terracing and horizontal divisions in the image, suggesting an increased sense of depth and an atmospheric sense of space. In comparison to earlier, monochromatic works, the visual field seems to have shifted from a close-up view to a more distant perspective; something like a landscape begins to take shape. All the same, Rohner's works should not be understood as depictions of the mountain landscape. The painting is rather firmly rooted in the autonomous reality of the material.

Rohner underscores this with the form of exhibition. A wooden cube is placed in the space, and on its outside walls works of paper are shown that are also subject to a process that takes place in several steps of paint baths and drying, application and removal until they take on their own materiality. On the inside of the cube, ink drawings are on view: dated, numbered, and in chronological order. They are analytic drawings that examine the density and structure of each of the oil paintings. The various drawings in the chamber suggest something academic: they refer to Rohner's painting, which they define as an outer world.

“Realgar,” or *gar real*, which in German means “even real”. The title refers to this creation of a reality. At the same time, it refers to an arsenic-based orange-red pigment that was already used for illuminated manuscripts and panels in the Middle Ages and which rapidly decays under the influence of light. This play on words reveals that Patrick Rohner's work engages with geological, physical, and philosophical questions while also exploring painting as a medium.

Julia Schmidt