



Markus Weggenmann
mostly paintings on paper
March 7–April 18, 2015

Markus Weggenmann (born in 1953) presented his first solo show at Galerie Mark Müller, then located at the legendary Schölleraal, in 1990, the founding year of the gallery. Now, we mark a jubilee at the gallery's third location and after 25 years of collaboration: the artist's tenth solo show at the gallery—reason enough for a look back. Weggenmann does so with a selection of works on canvas from the 1990s, placing them alongside primarily new works on paper fresh out the studio. The latter is the focus of the show, but the contrast to the earlier paintings attests to a central phenomenon in Weggenmann's work: its instant recognizability. Whether they are lacquer works, carpets, objects, canvas, or works on paper, they all profile Weggenmann's hyper-characteristic painterly hand. Regardless of the support, technique, or format, we find ourselves repeatedly confronted with the same questions: what is painting? When is a picture a picture, and when is it just an assembly of paint? What can form and color do, and where do they come from? He paints to discover, says the artist, and that his paintings are encounters with color and shapes. The current exhibition captures the essence of the artist's work.

Markus Weggenmann is a self-taught painter, having working as a psychoanalyst until 1994. The “free-floating attention” that he learned as an analyst influenced his approach to art. Without a focus, observing himself while painting, freely associating and open to chance. From the very beginning, the engagement with paint is central to his painting. The highly pigmented, intensely colorful distemper paint that Weggenmann still uses today became his hallmark. Since 1987, geometrically reduced formal shapes have appeared on his canvases, the so-called “abstract chamber pieces,” represented in the current exhibition by the diptych with the unpretentious title *Swimmingpool* (1992). Here, in constant, virtually stupefying rows of color strips and later gestural-amorphic formal creations, the artist consciously seeks to demystify or, as Daniel Kurjakovic puts it, to “humanize” non-figurative art. While Weggenmann, with his focus on the painting as a surface, stands very much in the tradition of modernist painting, his painting is not about the auratic power of paint or tickling out its subtleties, but its quite haptic presence, its brute impact. Thanks to the extreme intensity of the distemper paint, the shapes seem to separate from the surfaces, as if the paint were coming out into the space. Weggenmann's images are insistent and striking, so that we feel sooner closer to the visual and formal impact of pop art than to any strict abstractionism. This effect is amplified by the quantitative conglomeration in which Weggenmann once and now again presents his colorful distemper paintings. Hung densely together, in the tenth exhibition as well the, whereby the lustfully obsessive moment already accompanies the emergence of the works. In Weggenmann's studio, the works on paper emerge in large, indeed huge numbers, and accordingly the individual sheets step back in a certain sense: definitive here is the color and formal potpourri of the ensemble: large formats, very small sheets, framed paintings, and in between, fitting in just right, early works on canvas.

At the 2010 exhibition *Wasserfarben/Watercolours* at Museum Liner in Appenzell, Markus Weggenmann presented works on paper for the first time after many years. The installation *Batterie* combined the entire collection of sketches from which the artist took the basis for his well-known works in car paint on aluminum. This was the start of a development that in Markus Weggenmann's work today has reached its pinnacle. For the past two years, he has created hardly any works in lacquer. They have been replaced by a sole focus on the relatively simple and direct work on



paper and its further development into individual works, not least as a critical comment on an art world that demands ever larger formats and more complex forms of production.

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