



Markus Weggenman «flirting with sculptures»
August 31 - October 12, 2019

The current show at Galerie Mark Müller focuses on sculpture. For Markus Weggenmann, this does not entail a three-dimensional object placed in space. Weggenmann transfers sculpture to the two-dimensional level. The visitors encounter paintings that seem sculptural, exuding a physical, indeed virtually physical presence. The idea of the flat monument and the flat sculpture has interested the artist increasingly in recent years and forms the point of departure for *flirting with sculptures*. This flirt was doubly rewarded last year. The artist was awarded the Swiss Art Award in 2018 and a grant by the City of Zurich.

With a selection of ten works, mostly fresh out of the studio and all in a large format, Weggenmann returns to this flirt. In the process, the engagement with the paint itself, a key focal point of his painting, is central. He uses pure color pigments that are only bound very weakly. Light is directly refracted on the pigment, allowing the colors to shine powerfully without a layer of oil or acrylic. This leads to a physical perception of the colors beyond the visual. The colors confront us, challenge us, want to be perceived as our vis-à-vis. Alongside the intense luminosity, the satiety of the colors is striking, lending the visual motifs a sensual aura. Separated by hard, clear edges, the often-complementary colors used recall hard edge painting. On the canvas, primed in white, an additional color in the spectrum, he applies two to three paints free of arbitrary whims. For Markus Weggenmann, not the color contrasts, but instead the color temperatures and their relationship to one another stand at the foreground. This mutual reticence and/or openness results in rhythms and makes the organic shapes almost step out of their supports. By way of the extreme intensity of the color, the flat sculptures seem to break forward in a sculptural sense.

The subtle and sublime approach to color reflects Weggenmann's artistic background. He approached painting as an autodidact. For ten years, the *Streifenbilder* (Strip Paintings) shaped his way of working and served him as an object of study for investigating various colors. In recurring repetition, indeed research-like meticulousness, he used the *Streifenbilder* to open his very own approach to an abstract art. These were followed by high gloss lacquer paintings whose surfaces bring along a further condensation of form and color. Free of all painterly irregularity, the large-format glossy paintings invite us to a haptic visual experience and exude at the same time a reserved coolness.

Sketches have always been the point of departure for the artist's later paintings. Intuitively associative, they allow the painter's signature style to be recognized, both in terms of painterly quality and visual motif. These sketches are created in large numbers, a store of models that are then processed in several steps.

In *flirting with sculptures*, Markus Weggenmann (born in 1953) makes references to his own past. The hippie period, a time that shaped him, can be seen not only in the frequent use of various orange and greens. Orange-colored carpeting covers the entire floor of the gallery, a playful reference to the 1960s. The resulting interaction of the work series with the vibrating color sound of the floor covering refers once again to Weggenmann's unusual use of color. Virtually oscillating, the physical presence of the paintings moves to the foreground and lets the corporeality of the painterly act resonate.

For Weggenmann, the series of paintings of flat sculpture comes full circle. Coming from a family of stonemasons, he was the first in his family to turn away from the sculptural medium towards two-dimensional visual art. In his painting, he now takes up the question of how sculptural motifs can appear in the flat medium. *Flirting with sculptures* provides powerful and at the same time sensual answers to this.