



Dave Bopp

«floating icebergs with a taste of antimatter crazy physics»

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“Floating icebergs with a taste of antimatter crazy physics”: this is how Lebanese poet, painter, and thinker Etel Adnan describes the earthly status quo in her cycle of poems *A Funeral March for the First Cosmonaut* (1968), dedicated to the first man ever in outer space, the Soviet military pilot Yuri Gagarin, one year after his death in 1968. Seven years before, Gagarin had orbited the planet in 108 minutes and thus caused not just a political sensation but also achieved a pioneering expansion of our horizon. The limitless possibilities offered by outer space seemed finally within our grasp. But the view of the world also changed now that our blue planet could be captured from an entirely new perspective. “I saw the earth looked like a children’s ball,” Gagarin later reported. The cosmonaut’s journey brought about a comprehensive expansion of our perception and thus opened new spheres beyond the familiar and the previously conceivable. This is precisely where the works of Swiss artist David Bopp take us as well.

Dave Bopp’s profound interest in what takes place beyond our spectrum of perception is revealed at first in form and color. The striking painting techniques and the brilliance of the surfaces of color that allude to something that seems to take place beyond our visible world are quite characteristic of this. Bopp’s large-format works on aluminum composite panels, for example the works *Astral Beast N°3* (2020) und *Debris* (2020), which had already been shown previously, illustrate how the individual structures come together and take up the entire support. From close up, in contrast, the forms literally stand out from one another, revealing the artist’s approach. What is perceived from afar as a smooth surface proves to be an almost relief-like topography of paint on closer inspection. Using stencils, the artist works on the support so that the various surfaces and layers of color remain clearly recognizable. These superimpositions ensure a virtually tactile experience that can only be understood with a carefully scanning examination.

While the individual shapes allow for the artist’s targeted influence and control, the approach to the lacquer paints is more open, since Bopp consciously allows the dynamics and potentials that inhere in the material to work for themselves. The process thus seems to sway between intentional loss of control and active intervention. Using a kind of sampling process, Bopp uses the computer to search through photographically documented intermediate states of his works looking for formal details and sections that form the starting point for the next stencil. Many forms thus emerge on their own, but they each operate independently in these newly ascribed contexts. They refer to an “outside,” both in the sense of their origin in Bopp’s visual cosmos as well as an “outside” beyond the supposedly prescribed frame that seeks to create freely using the beholder’s own associations.

A fundamental aspect of Bopp’s artistic practice inheres not least in these open references that oscillate between the visible and the invisible. Although the beginnings of many works emerge from a concrete visual concept and an idea in the mind of the artist, they depart from this more and more in the process of working, through the overpainting and layering, taking on lives of their own and finally allowing space for new associations. Especially when hung next to one another, the three works *Plutonic Dream* (2020), *Boulder* (2019), and *Mock Suns* (2020) show the spectrum of formal approaches and their varied impact. Furthermore, individual elements and structures within the images as well as the partially instructive titles



of the works themselves reveal a certain direction of thought, but far from claiming to formulate it entirely or to conclude it. The artist refers to the title as a kind of “trigger that activates the process of viewing, interpreting, and projecting.” But in the very moment when the work *Boulder* reveals its rock fragments, it seems as if they would once again refuse our gaze. The amorphous shapes transform, they begin to move and thus unsettle the labile order of references revealing the inexhaustible possibilities of subjective perception and fantasy.

The artist thus understands himself as a kind of moderating authority of his painterly field of experimentation that also includes smaller works on paper where the surfaces are mottled or treated with remains of paint. Here as well, a technical and a thematic act of balancing is revealed, a complex play between recognition and withdrawal. This flickering shows the possibilities of an image: a “phenotype” which draws from an almost limitless pool of possibilities. This is why the works have an open, or rather, a repeatedly opening structure that is oriented towards the world and its characteristics, but operates beyond displays of visibility and reason. Dave Bopp’s painting is thus founded in a constantly expanding visual sphere that overcomes our imagination and remains ungraspable. It is thus hardly an accident that a further passage Adnan’s *Funeral March* describes a situation that captures the process of perception in Bopp’s own universe all too accurately.

“an incoherent light wave moved
Behind the clouds
You went for a swim in this far distant pool
You went to dissolve yourself in it.”

Marlene Bürgi