



Christine Streuli  
with Marta Djourina, Hannah Sophie Dunkelberg and Marlen Letetzki

«Übertragung Transmission»  
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The term *Übertragung* (Engl.: transference, transmission) is used to address various levels of meaning; its terminological and metaphorical use is both interdisciplinary and wide-reaching. The concept plays a special role in psychoanalysis: in 1895, Sigmund Freud used the term for the first time to describe the process of the unconscious reactivation of feelings, expectations, desires and fears from childhood to new social situations. Freud thus founded the conceptualization of the transference of certain characteristics that is still used in psychology today. At the same time, with the transference or transmission of affect an additional door to the arts is opened: classical rhetoric was already aware of language's limited possibilities and thus explored in depth the question of transferrable, expressive quality of gestures and images. The Italian humanist Leon Battista Alberti referred to these very rhetorical foundations in his treatise *De pictura* (1435), advocating a new evaluation of painting among the sciences and arts. After establishing the mathematical foundations of painting using geometry and central perspective, the treatise moves on to explore its impact and its intention, which, according to Alberti, was the transference or transmission of affect from the image to the beholder in a way that can be directly experienced. Now, almost seven centuries later, painting has long since been established as an independent artistic discipline whose legitimacy and possibilities go far beyond the treatises of the early Renaissance with their focus on affect transference and pedanticism about central perspective. Painting looks back over an amazingly multi-layered history, moving between a device for representing the visible world and aesthetic experience beyond figuration. And yet, today the question of painting's possibilities today unavoidably is posed: has the potential of painting not been long exhausted in the twenty-first century? The exhibition *Übertragung Transmission* at Galerie Mark Müller, featuring works by Christine Streuli and three of her former students at Berlin's Universität der Künste Marta Djourina, Hannah Sophie Dunkelberg, and Marlen Letetzki, can decisively refute this claim.

21 works in total are lined up in the first room of the gallery. The works of Christine Streuli, saturated with color, stand out from the white walls and define with a deep gray or bright violet frame their respective referential surface: the small-format canvas. The pictures differ clearly from one another, the composition, its patterns and structures are visibly sustained by an individual rhythm. The special mix-technique is not entirely clear even upon closer inspection, for on the small visual surface various kinds of paint application are combined. The artist works with standard inks and also inserts "quotations" from her own visual archive that she initially treats digitally. Here, for the first time she applies these quotations to her canvases using inkjet foils, a technical process of transference that combines fragments of past works with new color surfaces. The result is a combination of various techniques and gestures that emerge from both an analog and a digital world. In formal terms, in this dense superimposition there is a repeating element of Streuli's frequently large-scale works and murals. This process partially consists

in the removal and washing out of individual layers of paint and spots; while this might not fundamentally call into question the decidedly additive application of paint typical for painting, a new dimension is opened that equally weighs the present and the absent in the works. The artist explores surface and depth, past and present, original and copy, illusion and reality, visibility and absence on each canvas in a new way- elements, that have always been typical of the discourse of painting, the conditions and norming of which Christine Streuli questions in ever new ways using color, form, and materiality.

All of these painterly dualisms are also important for Streuli's teaching at Berlin's Universität der Künste. Her teaching itself represents an additional form of transference or transmission: the framing conditions of contemporary painting are jointly studied and newly defined. Theoretical foundations and viewpoints are handed down, subsequent generations of artists are both consciously and unconsciously shaped. To mark the occasion, Christine Streuli has invited three former students to present their works in the second room of the gallery. In the works of Marta Djourina, Hannah Sophie Dunkelberg and Marlen Letetzki, aspects such as surface and depth, present and absence, and illusion and reality serve to negotiate new painterly points of departure that reveal many commonalities and material differences. Using photographic light experiments, Marta Djourina explores the depth and superficiality of the photosensitive visual support that she treats with moving direct exposure and film negatives created especially for this purpose. In Hannah Sophie Dunkelberg's visual objects, the painterly gesture becomes a symbol. As a shell of themselves, the works seem to refer to something absent that inscribes itself visibly in the chosen material as an impression, relief, or inlay. Due to the oil and acrylic paints used, Marlen Letetzki's works might come closest to the classical notion of painting in pure material sense. And yet, the play of illusion and reality, two and three-dimensionality is here taken to extremes.

In all works in the exhibition, the intense engagement with painting and its gestures is not just visible, but almost palpable. "To recognize valid gestures, to learn how to let them happen, to interpret them, to analyze them and to repeat them, repeat them over and over. Incorporation. Gestures that can be relevant in painting, at least to its vis-à-vis," according to Christine Streuli. The amazingly broad spectrum and the virtually inexhaustible testimony of contemporary painting are here once again displayed. The obvious conclusion: the end of painting that has so often been proclaimed is a long way off indeed.

## Marlene Bürgi

<sup>1</sup> "It must be understood that each individual, through the combined operation of his innate disposition and the influences brought to bear on him during his early years, as acquired a specific method of his own . . . This produces what might be described as a stereotype plate (or several such), which is constantly repeated-constantly reprinted afresh-in the course of the person's life." Sigmund Freud, "The Dynamics of Transference," trans. James Strachey and Anna Freud, (London, 1958), 99-100.

<sup>2</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture*, trans. Cecil Grayson (London, 1972).

<sup>3</sup> Christine Streuli, "Artist Statement," *Lange Arme, Kurze Beine*, ed. Helen Hirsch (Vienna, 2020).