



**Markus Weggenmann**  
**«gasping for breath»**

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The autonomous presence and constant interaction of rich, clearly contoured color fields has always been central to Markus Weggenmann's painting, consistently combining this unwavering focus with material and formal shifts. This was true for the early stripe paintings, which were done by hand, but always seemingly systematic, as well as for the later industrially sprayed aluminum works, where the initially geometrical simplicity gave way to gestural shapes. These derived from Weggenmann's immense archive of sketches, and this still characterizes his artistic practice today. Using intuitive brushstrokes on small sheets of paper, he continuously explores the interaction between color and shape, observing what emerges from his freely associative activity, and repeatedly takes up these visual inspirations to then vary them using a digital technique, placing them in new contexts and transferring them to a support using a stencil. In recent years, he has once again returned to the brush, using richly pigmented distemper applied to canvas and paper.

Weggenmann's most recent works are based on this very production process: the paired works, series, and a powerful large canvas work shown at Galerie Mark Müller initially seem like abstract views of natural topographies. In diverging formats, large shapes stretching to the edges of the paintings evoke horizons. Fluctuating lines separating the colors appear to be chains of hills, ascendent gestures are reminiscent of stone formations. Clever omissions and surprising curves can suggest puzzling fissures or odd swathes while at the same time decisively dissolving the appearance of a reference to landscape. The borrowing from the figurative, with which Weggenmann's pure color field art for some time has been performing an ambiguous game, comes less from a turn to the world surrounding us than from a constant engagement with the concept of painting that is expressed repeatedly as working through traditional genres in his work series. Whereas his art was once dominated by geometric beams, and still closely linked to the legacy of the Zurich Concretists, later, with floral shapes, he offered an idiosyncratic approach to the still life. He then began to play with figure and background in sculptural motifs, and his current works recall aspects from the history of landscape painting. In some paintings, we are reminded of the exaggerated parallels in Ferdinand Hodler's Alpine panoramas, while elsewhere the framing elements and intentional gaps are reminiscent of Caspar David Friedrich's depictions of nature. But space is here expressed in a way that differs from an illusionist approach. The advancing and receding of the resonating colors opens only a minimal depth of vision, but in this way Weggenmann conveys with minimal means the sense of endless space that he knows as a liberating and humbling experience from the world of the mountains. His works open to a gaze that finds the place and time for us to surrender to their impact, to lose ourselves in a velvety green-blue, to allow ourselves to be seduced by a glowing orange or overwhelmed by an intense red.

In the works shown, Weggenmann thus also paints against the ephemerally rapid, endless stream of images of our everyday life, which is so difficult to manage and all too often triggers a sense of unease. Gasping for Breath is the name both of the show's key work, almost filling an entire wall, and the

exhibition as a whole, where the individual works, arranged in a restful hanging, offer islands where we can inhale while at the same time taking our breath away due to the powerful force of their reduced visual inventory. Markus Weggenmann's current works thus not only precariously hover between geometrical art and landscape depiction. They also make clear that his decades of creation have always been on the threshold between the manifestly material and ungraspable sublimity.

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