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Christian Eder

Constructive Abstractions

Christian Eder's art is based exclusively on the parameters of abstraction. His pictures and installations are dominated by the language of the constructive and the geometric.

In 2006, he created a comprehensive work block of oil paintings with oval forms and stripe structures. Christian Eder's painting is subservient to the *flatness*<sup>1</sup> of the picture.

The artist doesn't fashion a space outside the picture, doesn't integrate a naturalistic illusion of depth, but uses means that are purely immanent within the picture to construct an optical impression of multi-layering. Lines and oval forms cut across each other: a constant vibrating and iridescence comes into force between figure and ground. The network of the picture surface and the striped interior planes of the forms create a constantly changing picture. This recalls Bridget Riley's paintings, which were at the spearhead of op-art in the sixties and in recent years have experienced a renaissance: the perception of the observer is centrepiece, not so much the individual artistic style. Here we discover in Josef Albers the father of optical perception processes in the phenomenon of the picture, above all in his *Homage to the Square* compositions and also in his optical examples of geometric, three-dimensional figures. Victor Vasarely in the end refined these optical effects and celebrated them spectacularly in dazzling, enigmatic tableaux. Concrete art with the focus on perception had an elemental status in Austrian abstract art, although not as dominant and widely circulated as gesture and expression. The representative exponents are Marc Adrian, Hermann Painitz, Hildegard and Harold Joos, also the "Austro-Neo-Geos" Gerwald Rockenschaub and Heimo Zobernig and in their succession Esther Stocker.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Clement Greenberg, *Zu einem neueren Laokoon* (1940), in: *Ausgewählte Essays und Kritiken*, edited by Karlheinz Lüdeking, Dresden 1997

Recently, however, Christian Eder has occasionally broken away from his strict line in favour of a free painterly idiom. This has produced a couple of recent examples that have abandoned the canon of the objectively constructive language of forms and manifest free painterly textures. Thus the artist places two diametrically designed canvases opposite each other in a kind of diptych: one is distinctive for its multiple grid system of yellow and blue lines on grey ground. The left part tends towards a painterly monochrome plane with fine tortillon smudges and traces of drops. This creates an effect of atmospheric depth possibly evoking a water reflection. In another new picture series Eder combines monochrome planes with lattice configurations within one work on canvas. The artist uses various compositional principles of the abstract art of modernism: the monochrome picture was its hour of birth – Alexander Rodchenko painted three monochrome canvases in 1921 in the primary colours – as the ultimate stage of non-objectivity and at the same time as the end of painting. Despite the reputed death of painting, monochrome painting experienced a long era that has lasted until today (from Rodchenko, Ad Reinhardt to Joseph Marioni and Günter Rambow). The grid appeared for the first time in its pure form in the latter part of the 1910s in the neo-plasticist works of Piet Mondrian: at first still based on nature – abstractions of trees in an analytically cubist procedure – later as an autonomous pictorial structure of the vertical and the horizontal. The grid plays a dominant role above all in minimal art: in contrast to Mondrian's relational compositions, serial planar constructions in the work of Martin, Kelly, Marden and others. Eder abandons the picture surface in a monumentally designed installation. Neon tubes and black circles are his compositional motifs, which act as equivalents to the painted stripes and oval forms. The personal style has now become even more anonymous. In place of a controlled gesture as on a drawing board, we see pure construction made of industrially manufactured objects. The abstract picture is folded out into the surrounding space.

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