

»Correspondences« | Exhibition at Hattingen Municipal Museum, September 2021Thomas Koch – in dialog with Marie-France Goerens | Alex Klein | Karl Kriebel | Tonneke Sengers | Guido Zehetbauer-Salzer

Thomas Koch

CHALLENGING THE RULES

From his background in painting, Thomas Koch develops complex pictorial compositions with highly diverse materials and artistic techniques. He defines spatial structures that emerge from the two-dimensional. The connecting elements are recurring symbols and codes, planes and lines, constantly rearranged, in muted yet clear colors. The same holds true for the square, the dominant unit in his classification system. In his early works, this still takes the form of a subtle grid, a tangible background rhythm. But it is not long before the square emerges as a visible pictorial element that defines the composition, supporting lines and planes.

Layering, overlapping, even intersectioning of pictorial content, alongside the techniques themselves, creates a range of spatial constellations whose comprehensibility and lightness are almost surprising, given the intensity and earnestness of the analytical dialog accompanying their genesis. He paints over former works in the search for new structures from the old. Paint is applied and removed, reflecting his approach: Edging towards the optimal pictorial solution. Questioning, weighing up. Letting the work rest, returning to it once more, examining past steps, sounding out options. Covering, glazing.

Discovering the old, seeing the new – not only with regard to existing works, but also in terms of long-running existing choices, bringing the promise of a change of material, a change of system. The curiosity and fascination of discovering new things. This leads him to use the colored spines of books, whose prescribed dimensions bring regularity. While their reduction means breaking with previous decision-making processes, the many different combinations they offer also bring new and different challenges. Always different, always new.

Stimuli that have already been taken up frequently linger before new knowledge can trigger new insights and constellations. Glass and Plexiglas: The deconstruction of colored surfaces into their layers, in search of the passage of light. Then the execution in the object, the square becomes three-dimensional: The symbolic elements of the color composition spread through the spatial structure, to the six sides of the cuboid. Different interpretations for us observers to discover. And the layers only become one again, their colored shadow releasing them back into the plane, through the reproduction with light.

It is the line that gauges the limits of the compositional grid, that tests the rules. As the emotional density gathers pace, Thomas Koch sets the bodies and objects in motion through lines, sometimes delicate, sometimes powerful. At times they lean against the grid, at times they seem to wish to break free. No questions asked. All that is needed is the sensation – in the dialog with the surrounding space.

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