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DJ Bastard

Talking of lacquer and silicone one at least thinks of art. More likely of artificiality. Of a milieu, at any rate, in which originality plays no role, in which one attunes to parameters that have to do with the appeal of the surface, with the attraction of the first glance which seeks to serve primary needs. Even if one intellectually wants to leave this milieu, one does not really get closer to art. With lacquer and silicone one rather ends up in the vicinity of cars, quite generally perhaps also in pop culture. The latter may even be regarded as a metaphor for the material iconology of lacquer and silicone: on the one hand silicone is needed for sealing - for separating different areas, but on the other hand for exactly the opposite - namely for mending gaps or breaks that result from the clash of different materials or workpieces; lacquer creates uniform, shining, and perfect surfaces. So both materials serve to cover ruptures or breaks, to create the illusion of a perfect, intact, and sterile surface: an artificial world or rather a world of artificiality - and that can surely be considered one of the really great characteristics and achievements of pop culture.

Not without a reason has Sven Drühl opted for these materials that are highly exceptional in painting. They enable him to take painting to quite new spheres. Lacquer is a material that is actually extremely unsuited for painting: lacquer runs and is hardly controllable in the dynamics of its gradient, and moreover it is uncorrectable too - really almost a criterion of exclusion for a painter. In Drühl's work the silicone serves to limit the lacquer's gradients and force them into an artistic form. Similar to enamel art he uses it for defining colour fields, but at the same time the contour lines trace the concrete world in extreme reduction in the form of comic-like pop phrases, reducing the visible world - similar to for example Roy Lichtenstein or more recently Julian Opie - to a formal minimum that is only just enough to be distinguishable.

The material for Drühl's paintings is not only lacquer and silicone but also the world of motifs that he treats just like the physical painting materials. 'Bastard Paintings' he

calls the series of works he has been pursuing since 2001. This title alludes to the term "bastard pop", a musical approach - illegal at first - by initially anonymous DJs and producers from the 1990s, who sampled fragments from diverse sources and fused them to new forms of music in bootlegs. Characteristic is that the original audio material is really completely incompatible for the normal listener - sequences mixing Kraftwerk and Whitney Houston are only one example of such impossibilities.

In his pictures Sven Drühl proceeds similarly. He does not invent his own pictorial motifs but unscrupulously serves himself in art history: landscapes by Caspar David Friedrich, Ferdinand Hodler, or Iwan Schischkin, but also contemporaries and artist-colleagues who are friends like Eberhard Havekost, Rowena Dring, or Stefan Wissel are suppliers of motifs and compositions. "I stand in the studio and don't know what to paint because of the sheer pressure of spontaneity. Also I don't believe that it works like this. Even those who pretend to work this way bring the subject with them to the studio," Drühl describes the problem of the painter facing the white canvas.¹ Gerhard Richter, Sigmar Polke, indeed already Andy Warhol and Lichtenstein had fought vehemently against the idea of auctorial visualization and used models from the media world. Drühl does not bring in the media but accesses art history directly.

His paintings are a radical rejection of the hardly suppressable expectations in art, especially in painting, as regards originality and genius. Like most young people today Drühl experienced important years of development under the influence of a youth culture revolving around the music- and club-scene. Quite naturally there have been fundamental changes to the terms of creativity and originality in music for a long time. For many years the cult DJs have been sampling most diverse music fragments to new tracks and making use of the enormous range of stocks of music from different times as a matter of course. Usually instead of complete sequences only certain beats or hooklines are adopted, which are then digitally layered, newly assembled and arranged. Spherical tones, hard beats or other sounds are added and completely change the prevailing mood of the source material; hitting on certain moods is what first and foremost matters. The independent invention of a melody or something similar is no main criterion for originality any more.

Drühl's 'Bastard Paintings' plunder fragments and sequences from other paintings to

sample new landscapes from them. He sometimes uses pieces from a single painting and sometimes mixes different paintings together: Working on the principle of copy + paste he constructs new fictitious landscapes from trees by Schischkin, plants by Hodler, and mountain sequences by Friedrich or Joseph Anton Koch. Leaving all painterly hallmarks and detailed work of the models out of account Drühl bares their painting to the skeleton and reduces it to a rudimentary framework of lines, to a basic beat, so to speak. This is most obvious in his neon pieces, in which the framework of the contour lines is carried out with neon tubes. Individual elements are repeated and linked together like a music- or video-loop - scratching the picturetable as "DJ Bastard", Drühl juggles with his basic motifs. Although superficially seen there are no breaks but all individual elements dissolve into the new landscape continuum informally, Drühl - with the silicone ridges - also addresses the breaks of his pictorial principle which ranges between sampling (as a perfectly smooth method of montage) and collage.

Creative processes from the clubworld find their direct transfer to painting here. The pictures propagate a fearless mix that tolerates no borders between high & low any more. Traditional oil painting and car paint, enamel art and sealing silicone, ancient art history and contemporary art meet directly and casually merge into a new colour beat of the post-90s era. It is the self-confident voice of a generation that claims to have all pictorial treasures at its disposal at pleasure, that does not turn the search for meaning and the enjoyment of pictures into deadly enemies. Despite all the appropriation they consequently develop their own esthetic language which does not dispose of their predecessors' collective pictorial treasure on the dump of history, and nevertheless gets by without sentimentalities. It formulates the absurd simultaneities of our reality of life: silicone and nature, car paint and landscape, art and artificiality - and transcends its rated break points in the form of attractive contour drawings; decayed bones of art history as supporting framework. Silicone makes it possible.

¹ "I would have liked best to pay someone to save me the work." Michael Krajewski in conversation with Sven Drühl, in: Sven Drühl - Die Aufregung (The Excitement), Exhibition Cat. Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen/Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund, Leverkusen 2002, p. 34.

