



## Dominik Stauch – Castles Made of Sand

The pleasure of experimenting with which Dominik Stauch deploys his canvas painting doesn't exclude other mediums. Digital animation – where sound and images are of equal importance –, digital prints, collage, furniture becoming sculptures and spatial and architectural interventions are just as much fields of research nourishing one another. At the same time, his artistic and conceptual mind and approach remain clearly linked to the history of painting and its utopic content. The disputed geometric abstractions from the 20<sup>th</sup> century with their ideological and aesthetical hypothesis are at the core of attention, this is a tradition that Dominik Stauch constantly links to culture, images and pop music in a special way.

Deciding to focus the exhibit **Castles Made of Sand** on two-dimension works – paintings and collages – highlights the nonideological link between the artist and geometrical-abstract modernity and shows how Stauch's subjective approach casually introduces contemporary sensitivities to it. All of this far from any utopic burden concerning totalitarian demands and the failure inherent to them. Basic geometric shapes are unhesitatingly the language of his painting. The color application method is smooth and doesn't show any brush marks. The artist confronts those objective parameters to precise overlapping, opening pictorial spaces hardly graspable, full of excitement. It is not dissimilar to the re-emerging conception of the image as an open window on the world. What we perceive here isn't nevertheless a glimpse at the perceptible reality. However we discover worlds telling us other things. On one hand we have the artistic universe about proportions, perspective, colors and contrasts. Constructive principles which the artist absorbs through intuitive decisions, thus opposing his radical subjectivity to rationality. But on the other hand there is also the illusion of an undefinable space that may unsettle the spectator, nothing solid coming through his perception. The eye can wander even more freely, facing however some sort of instability. It is facing a pictorial world that cannot be circumscribed. The relationship between the image and the spectator can and has to be constantly adjusted, which is only functioning through individual reasons transforming the perception process into a personal cognitive process.

The open minded body of works showcased in the gallery is based on a great discipline of thought and creation. With the help of computer programs, the artist

sketches numerous constructions, changes proportions, creates then rejects symmetries and tests various combinations of colors. He deliberately plays with the classic theories of colors rules – primary and secondary colors, complementary and simultaneous contrasts – by testing combinations of shades that don't match at first glance, or by excluding, as much as possible, personal preferences. This infinity of combinations lies on an artistic concept which, like a converging lens, concentrates our views on social reality. The modern movement of geometrical abstractions were still trying to use creation in order to shape a social utopia seeking equality, within a superior whole. Today the challenge is about combining and reconciling different points of view. The survival strategy in this conflict – this is what Dominik Stauch's images teach us – consists in constantly making subjective decisions while putting them into perspective.

The title of the exhibition **Castles Made of Sand** refers to a verse from the eponymous track by Jimi Hendrix, for whom genius and failure are intertwined. By calling the myth of the genius, and thus romanticism, small size collages acquire an existential dimension. The internet images – recurring rodeo patterns, musicians like Hendrix on stage, Superman, but also angels of Annunciation – are even more reworked. The artist submits them to a dithering software and thus highlights their origin. He then cuts free geometrical shapes directly into the material. In reality, he combines there conception methods and patterns which are at first glance irreconcilable. Abstraction and figuration, pop culture and history of painting, accompanied by their cultural connotations, remain understandable as independent idioms within the collages. Philosophical systems and popular myths are part of it as much as heroic sagas, promises of salvation or annunciation. The sum of this heterogenous and incomplete convolutedness opens a surprising field for reflection and freedom. Thus an aesthetical thought gracefully linking inherent art questions to more pressing and down to earth ones.

**Elisabeth Gerber, August 2020**