
Philipp von Rosen Galerie

Jonas Maas

Chanala

November 4, 2023 – January 20, 2024

Opening on November 3, 2023 7–9 pm

We are pleased to present with *Chanala*, our gallery's fourth solo exhibition with Jonas Maas, who lives and works in Düsseldorf. He completed his art studies in 2014 as a student of Tomma Abts at the Düsseldorf Academy. In the exhibition, we are showing a series of new works that have been created in recent months.

As in the past, the works are hybrid objects that can neither be clearly read as works in space (sculptures or reliefs) nor as simple wall works. The abstract paintings are applied in acrylic paint (sometimes with lacquer, ink, pencil and other media) on primed MDF panels. The panels are often hanging a few centimeters away from the wall and thus enter into the room.

In the images, we see geometric shapes such as diamonds, wafer-thin and wider stripes, rectangles, and triangles etc. With the reduction to colors and shapes and his focus on structures, Maas positions himself within the tradition of Concrete Art. In doing so, however, Maas disregards any engagement with society and focuses strictly on examining the constitutive conditions and possibilities of painting. Maas implements this with the greatest possible intensity, care, and joy in experimentation.

Amongst the works we are showing is a group of vertical and horizontal rectangular panels that are reminiscent of international flags and whose formation actually has its origins in them. For example, Maas combines the flags of Chile and Panama in his works *Untitled (Chanala I and II)*, which became the title of the exhibition. However, it is not about painting national flags, nor is it about finding a contemporary form of Jasper Johns' field of meaning opened up by his *Flags*, or pointing out historical and current conditions in the respective countries of the flags. It is simply a matter of creating new, concrete compositions on the basis of the visual data of such flags. In this respect, the flags cited should only be seen as points of reference.

It is interesting to see how Jonas Maas develops his compositions in general and how the techniques he uses affect the composition: The starting point for the paintings are not drawn studies, but images that are developed on the computer using an image processing program. On the PC, Maas can work with different layers and test the different layers on top of each other, as well as edit and change the formations of the respective layers in isolation. Maas also follows the principle of erasing only on one layer of the image file, making the underlying layers visible, when transferring his digital designs to the three-dimensional works. In a medium-sized, vertical format work, erasure is not only indicated on the level of the image motif; instead, Maas "erases" the entire image carrier in X shapes and reveals the underlying layer in red as well as the inner frame/carrier construction. Accordingly, the painting turns out to be a spatially multi-layered work, which also has two rounded corners and a yellow-painted, approximately 3 cm thick side edge and thus departs from the idea of a traditional, rectangular panel painting in oil on canvas. In this work, Maas combines numerous layers that seem to be brought together at random. On the one hand, we see shadowy repetitions of the elements of the wooden construction, on the other, again shadowy details of a portrait familiar to connoisseurs from the manga world, and finally, and most prominently, thin stripes reminiscent of a barcode.

All of this is a game of triggered but disappointed expectations: the viewer is repeatedly suggested knowledge and the possibility of insight which is then immediately undermined. While the lowest layer, the revealed carrier layer of the work, allows us a "deeper" insight, it does not permit understanding in the broader sense. Perception is thrown back on itself, if you like, and is continued under new conditions.

With a larger, vertical format work, Maas demonstrates his ability to subtly make systems and structures visible. Specifically, possibilities of color compositions are shown that are based on the grid and rules of the popular

Sudoku puzzle. However, Maas does not play this game with numbers, but with colors. In terms of global art history, viewers are obviously reminded of Gerhard Richter and his 1024 or 192 squares and similar works. But unlike Richter's work, Maas' composition is not the result of chance, and there are not as many colors as there are squares. Finally, the application of paint in this work is also completely different from that seen in the other works in the exhibition. Contrary to keeping the paint application and the mechanics of the application invisible, so to speak, this is deliberately visible here. We see a thinly applied, schematized brushstroke gesture, a gesture that Maas otherwise does not allow himself and which he uses here as a sort of quotation.

A final aspect of the works in our exhibition can be linked to this application of paint: some of the works feature areas dabbed with bold paint, as if the surface of the painting was woodchip wallpaper. This is also a postmodern approach. The visible brushstroke is not the result of a gestural, perhaps even emotive painting style, but rather the extremely precisely worked fields of color with protruding noses of paint can be understood as a reflection of a deliberate distance to the other zones of these works, which are applied in a flat manner.

For further information and pictures please contact the gallery.