

DANIEL RICHTER. HELLO, I LOVE YOU

OCTOBER 9, 2015 – JANUARY 17, 2016

WALL PANELS IN THE EXHIBITION

During the past two years Daniel Richter (*1962) has focused on a question which represents a challenge for him: "How can a picture be reduced formally while being charged at the same time as regards content?" In his search for answers and solutions Richter has developed a new pictorial language which defies the customary motifs and painting methods as well as the familiar colours and themes. The resulting 36 paintings, of which the Schirn is presenting a selection for the first time, represent a caesura in the artist's oeuvre. Richter breaks with all that seemed familiar in his painting hitherto. His works are characterised by a remarkable stylistic complexity and versatility: the abstract-ornamental paintings created from the mid-1990s have been confronted since around 2000 with large-format, more strongly figurative and narrative pictures of a socio-political reality. Through the intersection of art-historical, mass-media and pop-culture clichés he has created idiosyncratic worlds. In 2015 he reduced the pictorial means, simplified the painting method; the tried and tested pictorial themes have disappeared and the picture has been brought back to its abstract primal state.

"PRESSING, ENTWINING, SQUEEZING"

The new series includes two groups of works. In one of them Richter focuses on the observation of the body and corporeality. In his previous works the human body was strongly contoured and always embedded in a superordinate narrative. Richter has retained the stereotyped and fleshless character of the figures, but now goes further. His interest lies above all in the surface. He allows the forms to blur and thereby lets the figures dissolve. In this way a fragmented, shattered physicality prevails. The figures are flat and intertwined; the forms crash mercilessly into each other and hint at the uncontrolled human sexuality which becomes visually reinforced in pornography. The result is an amalgam of colour gradients and explicitly erotic, voyeuristic allusions.

"FLUTTERING, FLEEING, HOVERING"

Richter developed his latest works by starting out with the line and colour. In his new works the line is not only a purely formal means of reduction, but also the starting point for pictorial design. At the same time it symbolises Richter's ideas of pictorial systems and schemes which help humans to comprehend and to represent pictorially the phenomena of reality. The latter becomes especially clear in the other group of works. Based on diagrams with which data, content or information are visualised, Richter paints amoeba-like areas on a subsequently painted monochrome background. The works recall maps or representations of territorial boundaries.

All the paintings in the new series impress with their materiality. Richter dispenses almost entirely with painting with a paintbrush. Unlike his older works he shades all the colours he uses with white. With the exception of the background of the picture he uses only oil pastels for these new works. This leads to a fundamentally transformed appearance. Richter also avoids a clear symbolism and leaves no room for anecdotal interpretations. And yet his pictures reflect his powerful attitude to art and the world. Richter's painting against his own routine has resulted in fascinating works which demonstrate not only a change but also a remarkable further stage of development in the artist's oeuvre.

QUOTATIONS BY DANIEL RICHTER

“The basic challenge which we face is: how binding are these changes within the genealogy of artistic thought? Simply to change the subject somehow or other, to paint corpses instead of flowers, green instead of blue or small instead of large is not necessarily interesting. What is interesting is to see the extent to which that can be declined through various forms as a method and not as a style, and whether something new can arise which creates a form of commitment, between the HOW and the WHAT.”

„You can see precisely how the pictures have been made, and this public aspect and this selfpresentation have contributed to the gaudiness. I would describe the pictures which have these elements that don't touch each other, that behave like oil in water, as “encirclement,” a sort of pressing, entwining, squeezing. In the others, what I see is rather a fluttering, fleeing, hovering. You could perhaps say that one series has an inclination toward harassment, and the other a tendency to disappear.”

“How much significance can I squeeze in there, and how much reduction is possible without becoming esoteric?”

“I noticed that when I use a paintbrush, I am always compelled to do something that I already know, and that is what I wanted to avoid.”

“In the process of painting and thinking it is always this ‘change’ which is interesting. The result, the finished picture, is always only a milestone on a longer journey. If you don't elevate success or your own stagnation to the status of method, then everything is always in a state of change.”