

The Secret Life of Color

"The beauty of the world is a whirl of colors," says the poet – and a look at the paintings of the painter Jochen Schambeck proves him right: hyacinth blue meets orchid violet, is embraced by camellia red, in turn embraces a deep fir green, flows slowly into lemon yellow, welcomes the trickling coral orange, makes friends with the neighboring maroon, looks for a little ebony black and a little dab of granite gray, against a background of lily white.

And a second look reveals much more: What originally appeared "just" like a flower garden, or more generally like a section of the infinite diversity of the plant world, grows and thrives – the blue rises up into the sky, the sunset glows red and orange, Green flows into the sea, in which the yellow ball of the sun is reflected; on the lava-black sand of the volcanic island, cloudy thunderstorm gray meets foamy white spray.

The painter releases the colors: they become fields of force, create atmospheres and brilliant color landscapes, allow the viewer to immerse themselves in the depths of the ocean of color and climb to the highest peaks of the mountains of color. One almost seems to feel moods, sensitivities, thinks of the Latin "vernare" – to be or become green, to renew and rejuvenate in spring: a state, a way of life. Color "tones" change towards literalness, towards synchrony.

With his picture titles, the painter completes what he explains to us and lays out in front of us: the works are referred to as "Lay Out"; "Splash Out" stands for a gushing out, an overflowing, also in a figurative sense – overflowing with energy, which is poured out, flows out of its own accord and reshapes and redesigns the color landscape: "Pour Out," announces the artist.

For the viewer, undoubtedly carried away and overwhelmed by the vehemence and force of the color, it is worth remembering at this point the general term under which Schambeck subsumes all of the above-mentioned picture titles and meanings: they are apostrophized as "overpaintings". "Overpainting" may seem irritating at first, but it is associated with – if not cancellation or removal – at least correction or improvement. But why would the artist want to paint over these powerful paintings of his?

This question, of course, does not arise at all: the picture will not be further worked on or reworked because it is "unfinished" or not fully successful. The opposite is the case: Precisely because it is harmonious, it lives through its color energy, which determines the rhythm of its future life. The painter follows this path, which is based less on an intention than on an inner necessity. He cultivates the color that takes root on the canvas and at the same time rebels against the image format and its limitations: the picture, or a picture, may be "finished" – the color never is. It commands its own continued life and determines the direction, detours and returns, branches, as well as the speed and duration of the process.

Jochen Schambeck lets the color go – and the circle closes with the last picture title: "Dedication". The meaning is also to be understood in the sense of surrendering to an obligation, or as a „leave it to yourself“ for its own destiny. The painter surrenders to the impulse of the color and the heartbeat of the work of art, is in constant transformation with it, and allows the viewer to accompany him if he wants. The painting, artist and viewer interact with each other and with the space surrounding them – they rub off on each other. By allowing the autonomy and independent laws of his colors to apply and exist, by respecting their signs of life and letting them do their own thing, Schambeck brings their essential vitality principle to fruition in his work: color, the "chromatic miracle," symbolizes nothing less than the vibrant life – quod erat demonstrandum.

Brigitte Herpich

(Text from catalog: Jochen Schambeck – overpaintings, 2024)