

Flora Klein's paintings are rarely based on preparatory sketches. Freed from guiding patterns of form or interpretation, to begin may be both easier and more difficult at once. There is a tension between focus and openness, intuitive action and critical self-reflection – this precisely appears to be the driving force of Flora's work.

In recent paintings, the artist tackles the weight of the initial gesture by transposing it into its priming layer. The transition from routinely applying a preparatory undercoat to making the actual painting, a conscious development of shapes and forms, thence becomes fluid: The brushstroke with a tinted primer on canvas is at once a coloured surface, and dashes to being a line – a bold swathe of colour; it demands an inquisitive glance and for further decisions to be made: contours, corrections, contrasts... Flora meanwhile paints mainly with acrylic colours, which set just as quickly as they can be covered by another layer. Thin, (semi-)transparent glazes and impasto sections alternately instil each other with plasticity. Sometimes the artist involves unusual materials, such as soap or melatonin, as means to manipulate a given formula in her works.

With each step, the texture of a painting becomes denser and changes visibly – both its materiality and its transience becoming evident. Flora meanwhile cares little about 'pure properties' of her materials, vain self-referentiality. Rather, we follow 'marks' that provide a physical encounter in time and space with a tangible form. Her works tell of the here and now – specific actions in the studio are being captured – as much as they reveal an ongoing process of reworking and reflecting. Over the past months, Flora has worked on several large-format pieces simultaneously, which have all resulted in strikingly different appearances. On each canvas, an irregular net appears to be growing radically out of itself. These new forms claim space and attention, yet continuously elude the firm grip of known imagery and language.

All the while, Flora is well aware that in practicing studio painting, she has chosen a framework in which, on the one hand, anything goes; in which, on the other hand, any genuine action is in danger of being thwarted by rich tradition and contemporary criticism. Whilst some regret the supposed loss of the symbolic expressiveness and social function of painting, others have made a profession of joking about its status as futile commodity that is easily packaged and flipped. Nostalgic and cynical poses grow in number – copies, pastiches, an affected expressionism or ostentatious negligence – gestures that all appear familiar, that the market knows how to assimilate all too well.

Instead of lapsing into rhetorical, reactionary or speculative forms, Flora makes use of the specific, intimate setting of her studio to practice a situated, pragmatic way of expression. Consequently, the artist develops no defining or signature over time, but rather a compelling 'mindset': an attitude, or way of thinking and acting that continuously mines the space between preparatory sketch and painting – where (yet) unidentified forms of life are able to manifest themselves spontaneously and self-consciously; where contradiction and discontinuity are necessities in a process, without artificial or hierarchical boundaries having to be drawn.

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