

The Picture in View of Its Environment

by Peter Herbstreuth

INTEGRATING STRUCTURES. Stephanie Jünemann's pictures appear as an optical event which reveals itself to be a part of the environment in which it is seen. In this sense, they are situation-related, like intensely alienated surfaces of a mirror. They absorb phenomena outside of the picture without keeping them. They change with the reflection of light that surrounds it. And the view which falls on it will never be sure how much the picture is aware of just what Jünemann has produced ("factual fact"), and how much the surface of the picture owes to the reflection of sources outside the picture ("actual fact").

The Verticals Vibrate. The surfaces turn in spaces. Repetitions inside the picture and reflections mix with those from the outside. The activated picture perceives an object whose picture surface can only be limited and spoken of when prerequisites are designated. A vague structure appears before our eyes. Jünemann's pictorial achievement lies in the clarity of the visual formulation of this ambivalence. The pictures integrate the optical coincidences of the environment and relate them accordingly to the place where they are, as they are and as long as they are there. If their location changes, the optical nuances change, too. That is why these pictures are reproducible only as photographs. For they change in the light as they do in the eye of the observer.

FACTUAL FACTS. Jünemann abstains from a theoretical supporting program and argues only with the three-dimensional potentials of colors, which do not represent anything but themselves. In this sense the pictures might be ascribed to concrete art. Free from the functions of illustration, colors and formal organization do not denote anything beyond themselves. Jünemann mixes acrylic clear lacquer with pigment, pours the mass on a resopal surface lying flat on the ground, distributes the pigment mass evenly with a squeegee, lets it dry, applies more layers, shapes it up and structures the mass until the surface of pigment attains for her an optically satisfactory culmination. She prefers medium-sized formats to reach every spot of the resopal tile without physical strain during work and to obtain controlled forming, even structures of lines. They give coincidences a chance, but do not hold them under control.

MAKING. It is here that Jünemann's emphasis on dialogue with the material shows. What one sees is the result of her hand and her pictorial concept while she brought out the true meaning of the picture. That does not mean that the pictures are finished before Jünemann reaches for the paint pot. There is no precise model. However, there is a concept which also trusts the pictorial process like an absolutely composed plan. In this respect, one may speak of conceptual painting, which does not exclude the investigative and the surprising.

ACTUAL FACTS. However, the nice thing for those who are viewing is that the concreteness does not remain flat and fall back on itself, but appears suggestive to a high degree. Indeed, Jünemann abstains from relationships to objects, and none of the pictures are titled. Yet when the pictures are viewed, thoughts come to mind of mirrored windows, flowing curtains and cloth, as if the folds fall on their own. These associations do not stabilize and consolidate into an object of certainty. However, they accompany seeing like a distant melody. Jünemann prefers vertical, horizontal and rectangular structures, and from time to time a wave-like alternation from light to dark contrasts. They are colorfully balanced, harmonic pictorial structures, which do not soothe the eye, though, because the smooth, slightly reflecting surfaces of clear lacquer act as a dynamic force for the harmonies and activate the eye. If one sits rigidly before a picture, the light in the room stays constant and does not cover anyone with luminous sources, then one receives a picture which settles down in this laboratory situation. That contradicts the environment of pictures as well as the praxis. And it seems reasonable to assume that Jünemann reckons with a moving, and not a rigid observer, is in so far as the pictures also render the movement of the light and its reflection an integral part of what is happening in the picture.

METAPHOR. Obviously, this work is concerned with the possibilities of a painter to make seeing itself an object. Here, seeing is already a reflection of what is happening. Here lies the cognitive critical sense and Jünemann's pictorial program. She makes seeing a metaphor by way of the visible. The metaphor arises as a result of pictorial preliminary decisions and become the condition for seeing the pictures. In the process Jünemann manages without didactic references. The structures do not show any objects outside of the picture, rather it succeeds in making the complications of seeing itself recognizable to the seeing. That is why he cannot become immersed in the structures or become lost in them. They are not so inviting for meditation, but rather present themselves as opponents. The moving observer

sees his own reflection as a shadowy image, but he himself remains outside. For that reason they are a reflection of seeing. And therein consists its visibility. The essential cannot be pointed at with the finger. It is a look into the mind of the observer.

MIRROR. Now, what has been said - cum grano salis - could also be said of reflecting metal plates, if they were viewed with an aesthetic glimpse into their pictorial potentials and were intensified as an event of perception. For a picture is basically given when the pictorial space, enclosed by a frame, calls for increased attention, even when only an empty space is visible within the frame. However, Jünemann takes into account that the imagination knows no rectangular frames. Pictures in the mind of the observer always appear as moving, vanishing frames in a vaguely fenced off space. Jünemann organizes her structures accordingly. They correspond to the experience of the city-dweller who is surrounded by reflecting display windows, showcases and buildings in which there is always something different to see than what is actually in sight; everything points to something different. Jünemann incorporates this allegorical view of everyday life without substantiating it and guides it back to the concreteness of the material in her own work - structured clear lacquer. However her work may inspire speculative, allegorical or crackpot inclinations, they can always be traced back to the starting point against which it can be reviewed. At the same time such a treatment of painting has the consequences drawn from a shortcoming, which has become more evident in the last few years.

The strength of panel painting was always its mobility. In the meantime, that can also be seen as a weakness. The lack of a specific location, which goes along with free accessibility, has now become a crusade to which many painters are giving increased attention. With her new pictures, Jünemann has opted for an intermediate form within this crusade. They are integratively produced in a dialogue and with superior mastery of the material. And they have evolved from a simple principle: clearly organized craftsmanship based on solid conceptual preliminary considerations with a strong power of suggestion. Everything beyond that are speculative adjuncts. They change like the reflections of luminous sources. But without them, there is no pleasure.

Translation: William Mickens