

TILMAN

CURATED OBJECTS





49.05 (SYDNEY V) . 2005 . LACQUER ON MDF & PLEXIGLASS . 62 X 43 X 7 CM



10.07 (STACK) . 2007 . LACQUER ON MDF & PLEXIGLASS . 38 X 25.5 X 11.5 CM



24.06 (VAL DUCHESSE) . 2006 . LACQUER ON MDF & PLEXIGLASS . 52.5 X 132 X 251 CM

FREE COLOUR

In history, it has been the activity of painting that has brought the colour of the surrounding world – be it natural or urban – into an image format, into a frame, or into an interior. In the form of a painted image, the viewer could not only witness a dramatic likeness of the world, but could also gain a feeling for the connection that the artist had with the subject matter of that image - through the colours used, the artist was able to practise a form of language that went above written or spoken words. Colour operates on a level that is as abstract as empathy itself.

Just as there are countless applications for colour as a tool towards pictorial description, it also has an unspeakably diverse history as a means for the communication of social and cultural values. Colour itself stands as an icon of status. It has the ability to exist as a rich, diverse, political, emotional, intellectual and psychological symbol. All of which are abstract values when represented in the form of a colour.

Piet Mondrian used the term Plasticism to express the pure reality of colour. It occurred to Mondrian that <<the new reality was the reality of plastic expression, or the reality of forms and colours in painting>>. Following this realisation, he then in collaboration with Theo van Doesburg went on to galvanise this theory of colour painting by developing Neo-Plasticism in 1920, which is the term generally applicable to the majority of work produced by the artists associated with the De Stijl movement.

These two artists focused upon colour in the purist sense. Following their radical distillation of the picture plane into geometric elements, they certainly revolutionised a number of understandings of colour, and they developed its presentation and application as a very important value of its own.

One particular level of appreciation for colour is in the form of the painted object. Through the application of paint to a sculptural material, that object could then embody colour as an entity with specific dimensions. In concept, that object would then become a concentrated mass of colour with internal volume. The colour could then become an integer, or a building block, for artworks such as painting constructions, assemblages, wall reliefs and spatial models such as mobiles, stabiles, and much more recently, site-specific installations, where the volume of the work could become dispersed, decentred or intuitively located according to the ambient characteristics of differing sites.

Moving into the present tense, it often seems futile to draw lines between differing forms of the 'Abstract', 'Concrete', or 'Plastic' in contemporary art. Most of the time, it may be better to leave definitions like these behind, utterly dissolved as they have become.

To follow this idea of Neo-Plasticism and the painted object, there seems to be a vast array of contemporary Abstract Art practitioners developing an expanded variation of the De Stijl program. That is, not only do they appear to offer a purist view of colour, but they are also able to build a very abstract level of commentary into their work, so that they may focus upon some of the intricacies concerning themselves and their own 'world view'.

One such artist might be the German-born, Brussels resident Tilman, whose use of colour and tone along with intuitive placement produces visually complex constructions of both fixed and site-specific nature.

Within Tilman's work, careful juxtaposition of tonally moderated forms of colour derive their significance from outside themselves – their complex structure seems somehow closely related to the world that they are made from. Even given their clean nature, these informal and approachable arrangements of painted objects seem to reference imperfect qualities just as much as they exude notes of unity, complement and harmony.

The use of bright colour in 10.07 (stack) assists in a Concrete reading. 10.07 (stack) is a work consisting of painted objects. Each object has been treated individually with the knowledge that each element will in fact somehow become a composite part within a work. The order of the elements is unknown before the time of making. The final appearance of the work is unknown until finished. In fact, the orientation of the work may be completely under question until the finished arrangement of painted objects can be seen entirely. It therefore becomes a cluster of visual activity, including both seen and unseen areas of layered contact. As a chromatic body of sorts, a collection with object status and dimensional form.

Tilman's works are experiments in colour. They test new boundaries in terms of placement and juxtaposition of colour and form. Perhaps the artist sees the inner spaces of his Stacks as being ideal spaces for new colour experiments. Could this be why we see a high degree of considered experimentation and careful intuition when it comes to examining the placement and juxtaposition of those elements within each of his works? Negative spaces offset intuitively slotted elements just as colour combinations jar as deliberately (and interestingly) as those that sit comfortably.

Here, by working through chromatic values such as pitch, saturation, tone, hue and contrast, Tilman presents the most abstract qualities of colour; those aspects of a colour that go beyond reference to anything and have no associative value.

This is the point from which these colours can begin to function in a 'controlled environment'. In reaching this level of hermetic purity, works such as 10.07 (stack) and 24.06 (Val Duchesse) embody the specific colour interactions within themselves. They are no longer a work about some kind of intangible association with the world. These works are only (but not simply) about themselves.

To look at a work such as 24.06 (Val Duchesse) requires the viewer to completely ignore vague interpretive assumptions concerning likeness or landscape. To actually see this work is to utterly ignore the whole idea of colour representing anything directly. Indeed, the very key into looking at the visual activity of 24.06 (Val Duchesse) is to forget the whole notion of colour as colour, and to begin by seeing the work as a mental manipulation, as a construction made from synthetic materials and values, the content of which are strictly specific to the work.

Within the visual activity of 24.06 (Val Duchesse), one cannot help but notice simultaneous occurrences, multi-layered interactions, gradual shifts of visual weight and changing points of balance. To see these multifarious phenomena as a concept of experience, and to consider these material events as being only unto themselves ... surely this is what it means to view the work as some kind of Plastic moment, where the work is centred in a purist perceptual space that becomes the context for the crystallization of inexplicable momentary realisations – concerning only the work and the viewer.

Perhaps the key imperative to the use of colour in Tilman's work is that it is employed in the atmospheric sense. That way, colour becomes a device for experience and the purchasepoint for the viewer to appreciate the form(s) of the work also, as both eventually become indivisible.

The artificiality of the materials used to construct each work seem to negate a connection to the earth or surrounds of any sort. Even the public activity within the museum that surrounds his work – rich with occurrences and interactions – seems to be organic in comparison. Maybe it is the viewer who forms the link from the work back to the world, through that viewer's careful process of looking slowly then leaving....

As I have called them, the material and colour 'values' present within each work seem to operate in ways separate to the natural laws of gravity and optics, the effects of which are deferred and present at the same time also. Tilman's works mirror processes concerned with physical activity. Importance lies in decisions relating to placement. Yet there also hangs over each work the idea of the process as an extended continuum, and an artist's language as a string of works larger than any finished form.

The whole idea of the title for this essay, *free colour*, is one of wonderment – of what the result would be if colour were allowed to escape logical readings. To instead be allowed to exercise empathic effect in a way that may be as yet unconsidered. To successfully do this would perhaps allow Tilman's use of colour 'value' the space to become an idea of colour, a slight revision of the process and interpretation of colour when coupled with form. This would however require the co-operation of a viewer, willing to look unflinchingly.

Maybe the biggest challenge here lies with the viewer.



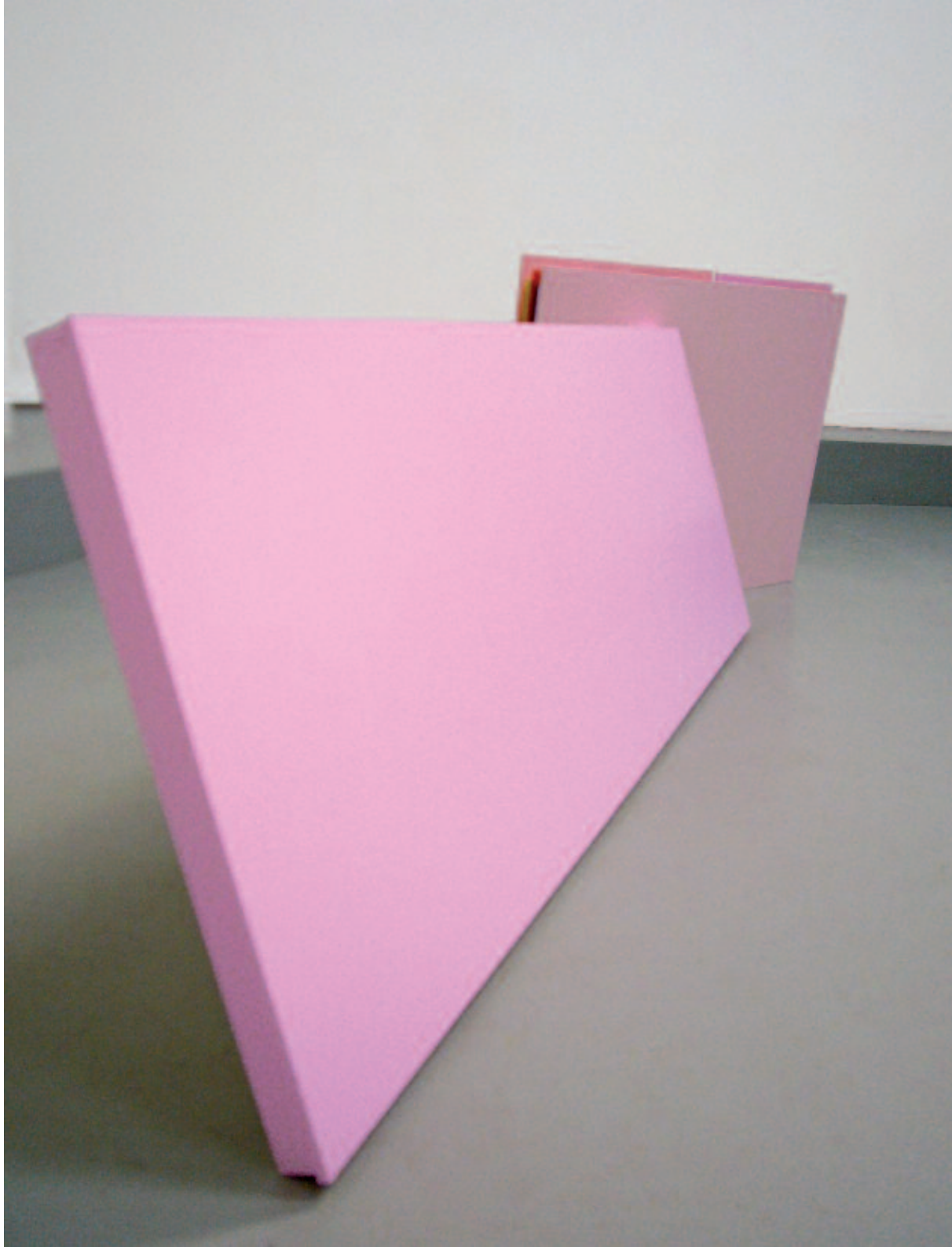


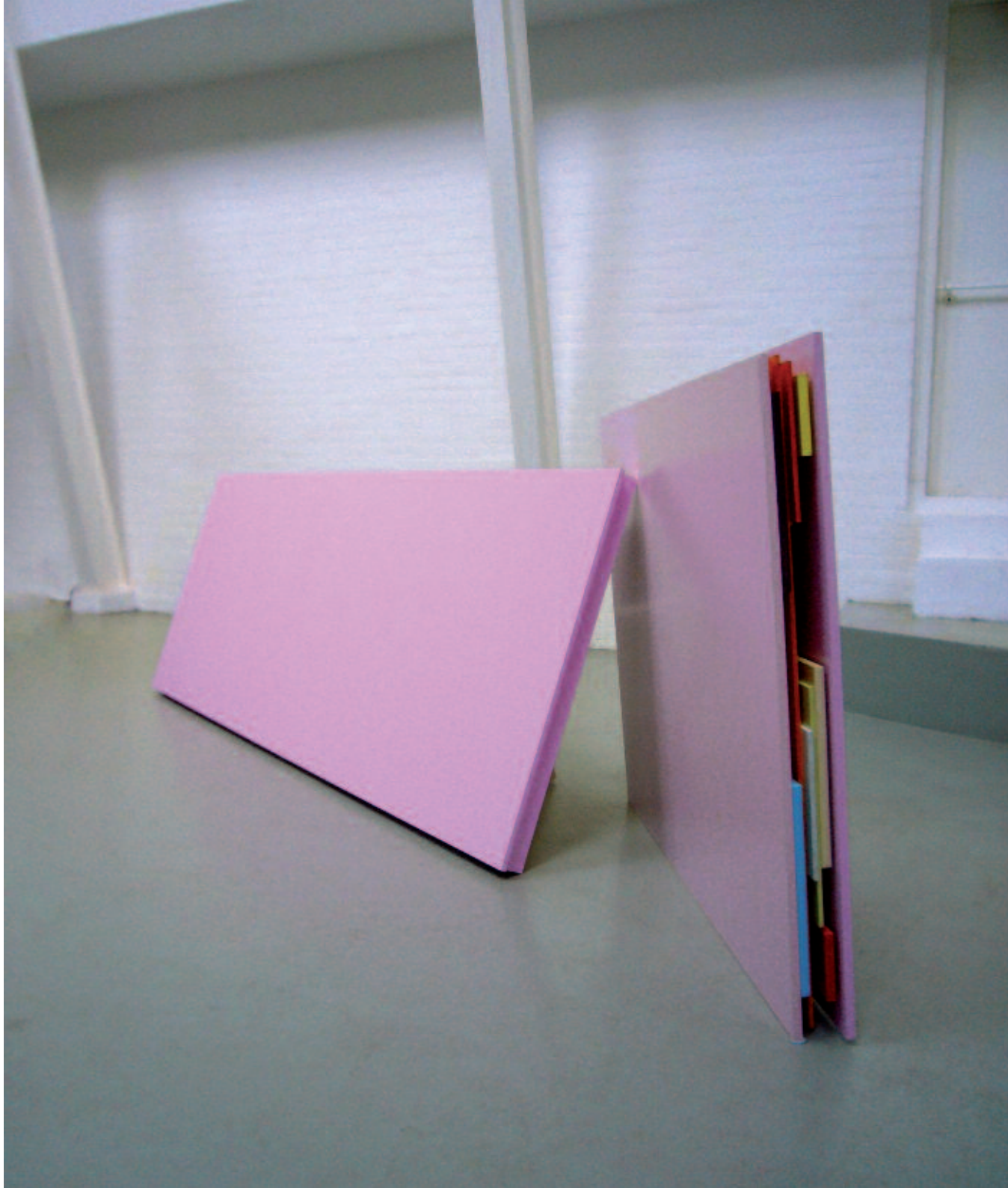




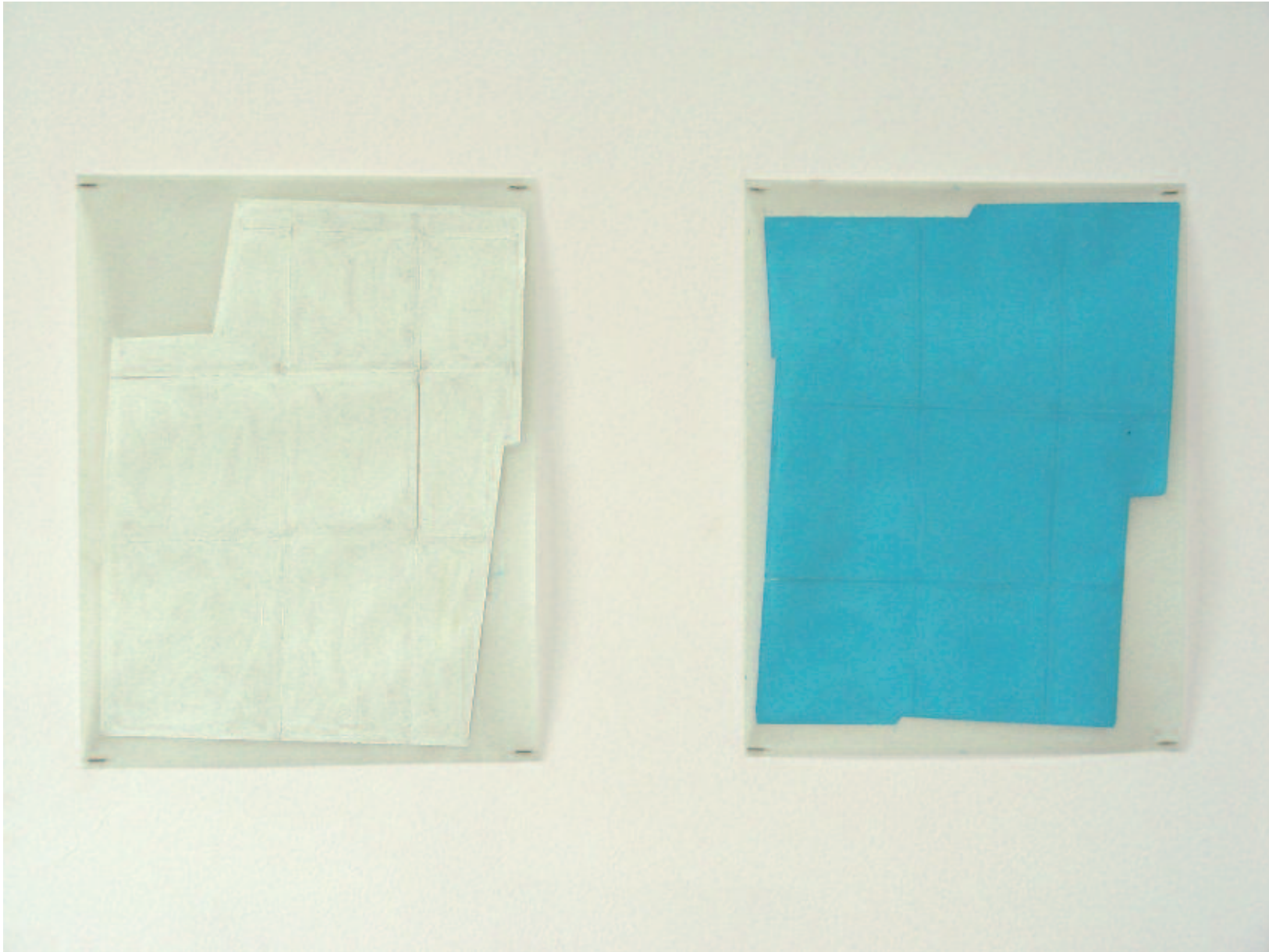






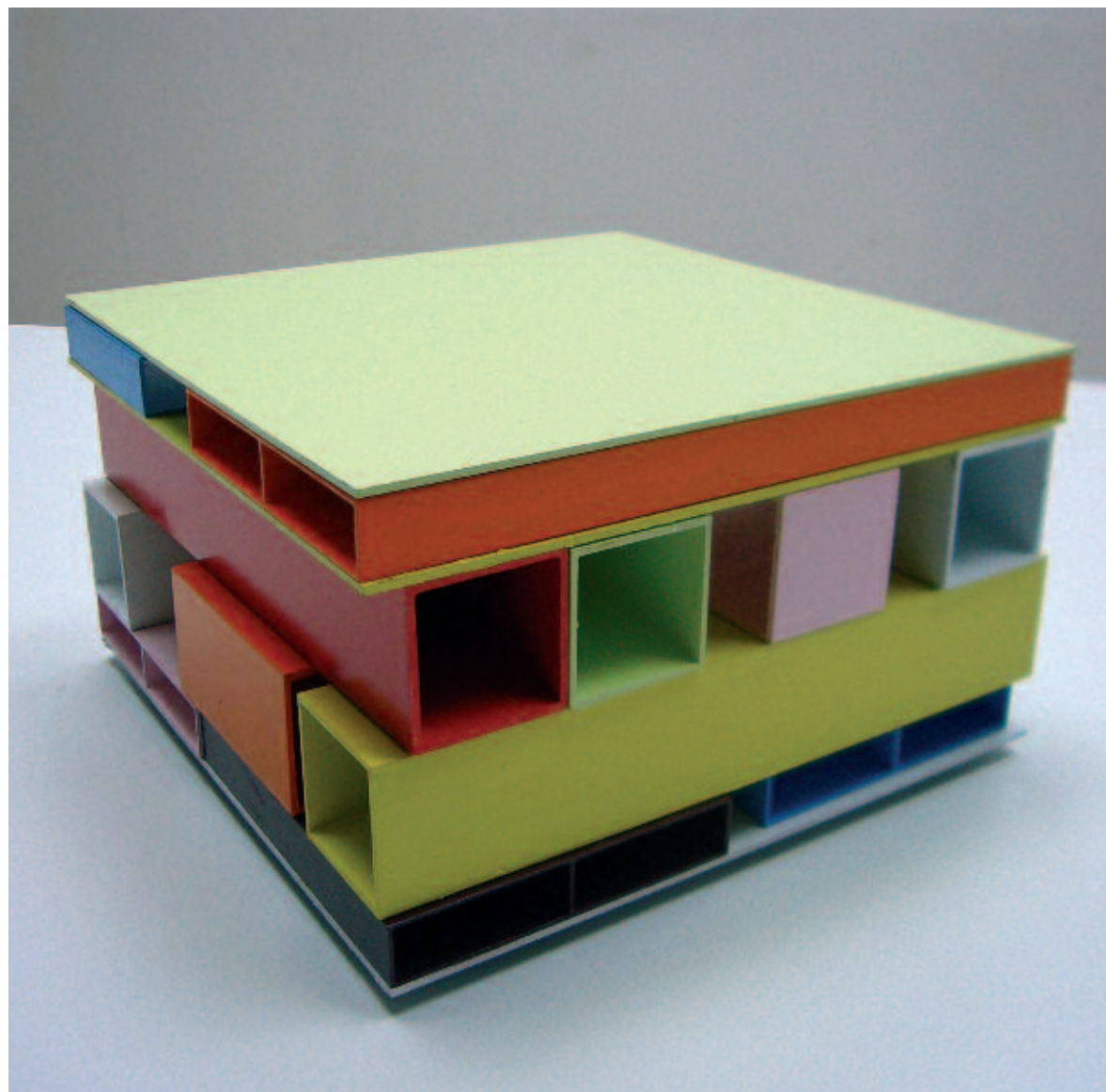
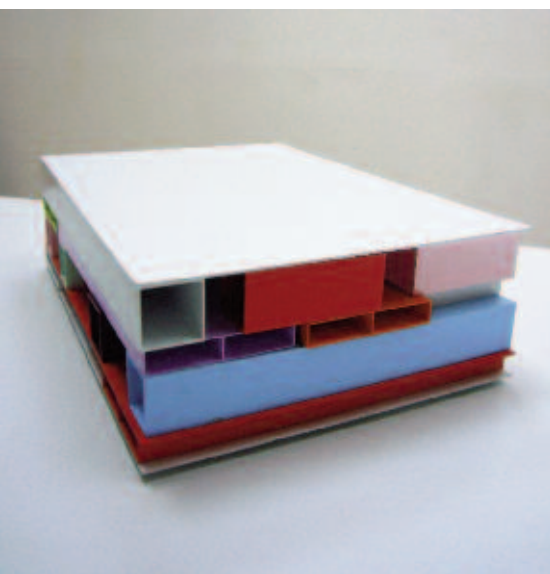












... IN THE LANGUAGE OF NON-OBJECTIVE ART IT IS THE VISUAL FORM PER SE AND ITS DIRECT PERCEPTION THAT CONSTITUTE THE 'ESSENCE', OFTEN DEMANDING SERIOUS REFLECTION, THE ACCEPTANCE A PRIORI OF A PURELY AESTHETIC, CONCENTRATED AND AUTONOMOUS REALITY AND, AT THE SAME TIME, THE CAPACITY TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN SUBTLE VARIATIONS OF COLOUR AND FORM.

THE MAIN PART OF TILMAN'S EXHIBITION AT DŮM UMĚNÍ - HOUSE OF ART IS CONCEIVED IN THREE ACTS ENABLING THE ARTIST TO ARTICULATE HIS DISCOURSE - AN EXPLORATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPACE AND COLOUR AND HOW THESE TWO 'GIVENS' MODIFY OUR PERCEPTION OF LIGHT - IN THE FORM OF A UNIFIED MEGA-WORK: A 1.5 METRE-HIGH RED HORIZONTAL STRUCTURE OR WALL-SEGMENT, ENTITLED EXPANDER, SPANS THE CENTRE SPACE; AS A COUNTERPOINT TO THIS, TWO CONSTRUCTS, EACH 260 X 190 CM, ENTITLED URBAN STRUCTURES, MOUNTED IN THE ADJACENT SPACES OPPOSITE EACH OTHER, OPERATE IN REVERSE, HUGE GEOMETRIC COMPOSITIONS DEPLOYING A SUBTLE SYNTAX OF WHITE AND NUANCES OF WHITE. COMPLEMENTING THIS MEGA-WORK FIRSTLY, HUG 1-4, A SERIES OF FOUR 'OBJECTS', EACH 51 X 39 X 10 CM, WHICH APPEAR FIRST AS SURFACE ELEMENTS FORMED OF PLANES AND LINES BUT, WHEN LOOKED AT SIDEWISE, REVEAL A NUMBER OF GEOMETRIC STRUCTURES OF VARIOUS COLOURS SEPARATED BY 'NEGATIVE' INTERSPACES. AND SECONDLY, PERHAPS THE MOST RADICAL DEMONSTRATION OF THE ARTIST'S CORE CONCEPT A - TWO PANELS LEANING ONE AGAINST THE OTHER, 305 X 110 X 10 CM OVERALL, PAINTED IDENTICALLY IN A PURE AND PRECISE WHITE BUT CONCEALING AN IRREGULAR ACCUMULATION OF MONOCHROME PLANES, ONLY THE EDGES OF WHICH ARE VISIBLE.

THIS EXHIBITION LEAVES US IN NO DOUBT AS TO THE UNIQUENESS OF TILMAN'S WORK AND CONFIRMS THAT IT IS STILL POSSIBLE TO FIND NEW WAYS FOR LIGHT AND COLOUR TO BE EXPRESSED BY THE ARTIST AND PERCEIVED BY THE HUMAN EYE ...

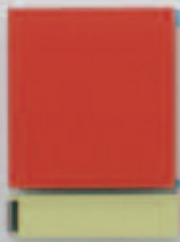
JIŘÍ VALOCH
BRNO, APRIL 2008



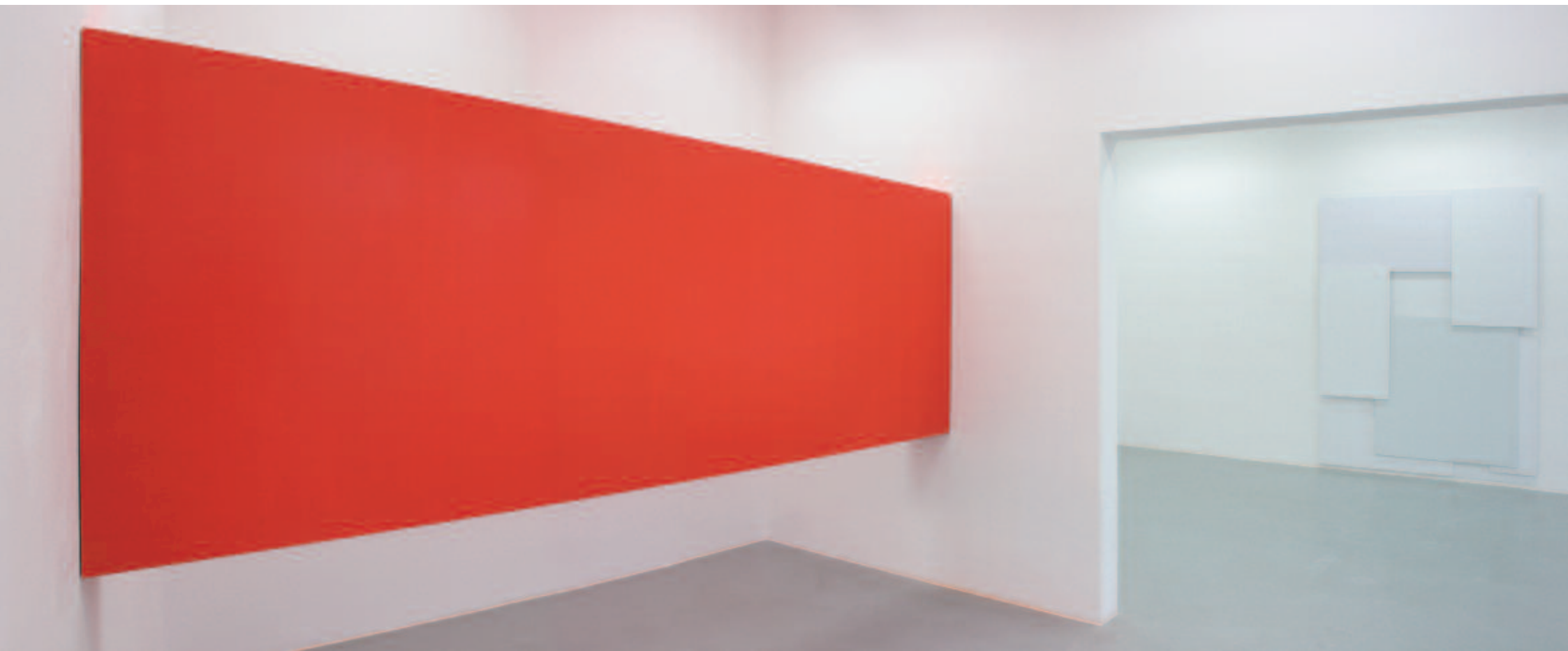


















CURATED OBJECTS

Maybe I have to start with a confession. This is not the first time that I have written about Tilman. The first time was about two years ago and I did it anonymously. And worse still I didn't even mention him by name. It was about his stacked work 24.06 (Val Duchesse). It was in an essay on contemporary concrete art and, as one of the inventors of the idea of concrete art, Theo van Doesburg, once said that artists should not sign their work, I decided to write an essay on concrete works instead of on concrete artists. It was an experiment about looking at art as a universal experience instead of making it an ego document. The highly individualistic could also, I supposed, use some counterforce and let's be honest, Tilman's work seems very suitable to reflect on from a formal as well as an art historical point of view.

So why did I regard the work of Tilman as exemplifying contemporary concrete art? At first there seems to be a deliberate lack of lyricism and the stacking of 24.06 suggests a kind of non-absolute order. One can easily imagine other ways of ordering new works which would also work. This is what concrete art is traditionally about: one outcome of many possibilities, in which the specific outcome is interesting but not all the other unrealised manifestations. The specific outcome is not to be regarded as a personal choice but just as a remarkable phenomenon. That's also why the concept of randomness is applied so often in concrete art. Tilman's work invites a reflection on formalist points of view; it is about concrete light (and shade), about volume, matter and spatiality. It comes as a tasty surprise. I also see typical contemporary elements in Tilman's work: an apparent obvious break with primary colours, and a stepping-out of the domain of painting into something in between sculpture, architecture and painting. The use of secondary colours, the crossover and, in many of his other works, the site-specific and installation element all make Tilman's work very contemporary.

At first sight, leaving out the artist's name doesn't change the views on the work. One doesn't need to know that Tilman studied in Munich, lives in Brussels and New York, and is very active as a curator to appreciate his work. Or does one?

I started to question my rigid crusade against individualism recently after a lecture by the Belgian artist/writer Hans Theys. He has written over forty books mainly on Belgian artists. His reasons for writing about art seemed contrary to mine: an interest in artists rather than in art itself. In his opinion an artwork is by definition the result of the 'highly defective' personal view of the artist. As an echo of Theys's view I hear Tilman say "Look away". Theys assumes that every artist has an undeniable grid into which every work he makes fits. Even if an artist thinks that he has created something completely different, moved in a new direction, afterwards it always turns out to fit the grid. I know it's not a completely new view that Theys presents. I have heard people say before that most artists basically always make the same work, write the same book. But Theys's quest is to find the underlying personality.

So what if I am wrong and personality does matter? What if Tilman's use of secondary colours is not an ironic comment on Modernism? Why do I scarcely ever see the use of black in Tilman's work? Why are the colours so soft and beautiful? Maybe it's me who wants to see irony instead of a very personal aesthetic. Maybe I have to reconsider – for the Tilman for I know – is a very generous and sensitive person. Instead of the rational constructivist he is often considered to be, maybe it's not only De Stijl, Bauhaus and Minimalism that precede him; maybe it's also Impressionism and especially the soft Belgian version, as for instance the work by Emile Claus. Didn't the Impressionists want to catch the light? Maybe it's no coincidence that Tilman moved to Brussels.

Why look only at Tilman's artworks and not at his other activities, his curatorial practice for instance? Maybe we should not separate curatorial activities from art-making as strictly as we have learned to do. At least not in Tilman's case. To curate a show is like making a site-specific installation. Looking again at many of Tilman's works one could see them as 'curated objects'. His stacks and installations are like exhibitions in themselves consisting of monochrome paintings of different sizes and materials squeezed into a very clear, almost minimal, artistic statement. In his site-specific installations we could see his objects as an exhibition within an exhibition, as a non-objective version of a Russian Matroyska doll. Taking a closer look, we see that the objects consist of a great variety of elements creating a complex structure of related spaces and volumes in which, in our imagination, we could walk around, finding new alleys and levels after each corner. Suddenly I remember Tilman telling me he loves to walk around in the city.

Maybe I was wrong after all and Tilman's work is much more personal than I wanted to believe at first.

JAN MAARTEN VOSKUIL
HAARLEM, MARCH 2008



LIST OF WORKS

- P 4 08.07 / 2007 / LACQUER ON MDF BOARD / 122 X 122 CM
- P 5 01.08 (HOUSE OF COLORS I) / 2008 / LACQUER ON MDF BOARD & ALUMINUM / 127 X 65 X 25 CM
- P 6 TILMAN AT SONJA ROESCH GALLERY, HOUSTON TX (US) / 2007 / INSTALLATION VIEW
- P 7 12 COLORS FOR BRUSSELS I / 2007 / SITE-SPECIFIC WALL WORK/ ADHESIVE FOILS / 320 X 300 CM / INSTALLATION VIEW / CCNOA, BRUSSELS (BE)
- P 8 49.06 / 2006 / LACQUER ON MDF BOARD & PLEXIGLASS / 42 X 32 X 8 CM
- P 9 10.07 / 2007/ LACQUER ON MDF BOARD / 39 X 14 X 16 CM & 46.06 / 2006 / LACQUER ON MDF BOARD / 32 X 31 X 9.5 CM
- P 10/11 SPLICE / 2008 / IN 2-PARTS / LACQUER ON MDF BOARD / EACH CA 300 X 90 X 8 CM / INSTALLATION VIEWS / RC DE RUIMTE, IJMUIDEN (NL)
- P 12 GRIDWORKS / 2006 / CRAYON ON OPALINE / 35 X 40 CM
- P 13 FUNDSTÜCK / 2006 / CRAYON ON OPALINE / 34.5 X 27.5 CM
- P 14 28.08, 27.08, 26.08, 25.08, 24.08 (VOILADEUXTROUVEZ) / 2008 / LACQUER ON ALUMINUM AND FOAM / 41 X 29 CM EACH / 25.08-28.08 / PRIVATE COLLECTION
- P 15 VOILADEUXTROUVEZ / 2008 / WALL PAINTING / LATEX / 320 X 170 CM / INSTALLATION VIEW / PELOTON, SYDNEY (AU)
- P 16 30.08, 31.08, 32.08 / 2008 / LACQUER ON ALUMINUM / 35 X 23 X 11 CM, 42 X 30 X 13 CM, 22 X 22 X 13 CM
- P 18 LOOKING AWRY / VISITOR AT DŮM UMĚNÍ - HOUSE OF ART, ČESKÉ BUDĚJOVICE (CZ) / APRIL 2008
- P 19 13.08 (PINK CHAMPAGNE) WITH 10.08, 06.08, 09.08, 08.08 (HUG 1-4) / 2008 / INSTALLATION VIEW / DŮM UMĚNÍ - HOUSE OF ART, ČESKÉ BUDĚJOVICE (CZ)
- P 20 07.08 (HUG) / 2008 / LACQUER ON MDF BOARD / 51 X 39 CM
- P 21 17.08 (EXPANDER) / 2008 / SITE-SPECIFIC INSTALLATION / LACQUER ON PLYWOOD / 386.5 X 122 X 30 CM / INSTALLATION VIEW / DŮM UMĚNÍ - HOUSE OF ART,
- P 22 10.08, 06.08, 09.08, 08.08 (HUG 1-4) / 2008 / LACQUER ON MDF BOARD / 51 X 39 CM
- P 23 13.08 (PINK CHAMPAGNE) / 2008 / IN 4-PARTS / LACQUER ON MDF BOARD AND ALUMINUM / 245.5 X 220 CM / PRIVATE COLLECTION
- P 24 17.08 (EXPANDER) WITH 15.08 (URBAN STRUCTURE II) / 2008 / INSTALLATION VIEW / DŮM UMĚNÍ - HOUSE OF ART, ČESKÉ BUDĚJOVICE (CZ)
- P 25 14.08 (URBAN STRUCTURE I) / 2008 / IN 12-PARTS / LACQUER ON MDF BOARD / 260 X 190 CM / PRIVATE COLLECTION
- 15.08 (URBAN STRUCTURE II) / 2008 / IN 12-PARTS : LACQUER ON MDF BOARD / 260 X 190 CM / PRIVATE COLLECTION
- P 26/27 16.08 (A) / 2008 / IN 2-PARTS / LACQUER ON MDF BOARD / 305 X 110 X 10 CM OVERALL / INSTALLATION VIEWS / DŮM UMĚNÍ - HOUSE OF ART
- P 29 34.08 (CONSTRUCT MELBOURNE) / 2008 / LACQUER ON MDF BOARD AND WOOD / 284 X 133 X 122 CM / INSTALLATION VIEW / CONICAL, MELBOURNE (AU)

TILMAN

BORN 1959 IN MUNICH (DE) . LIVES & WORKS IN BRUSSELS (BE) & NEW YORK CITY (US) . WWW.LOOKAWRY.COM

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS *PUBLICATION / EDITION

- 2008 12 COLORS FOR BRUSSELS II, KARTELL FLAGSHIP STORE, BRUSSELS (BE) *
DETAILS EXPOSED, MCBRIDE FINE ART, ANTWERP (BE) WITH WARD DENYS *
RM103, AUCKLAND (NZ)
PELTON, SYDNEY (AU) *
- 2007 DŮM UMĚNÍ - HOUSE OF ART, ČESKÉ BUDĚJOVICE (CZ) *
12 COLORS FOR BRUSSELS I, CCNOA, BRUSSELS (BE) *
SONJA ROESCH GALLERY, HOUSTON TX (US) WITH ALMA TISCHLER *
LOST & FOUND, MINUS SPACE, BROOKLYN NY (US)
- 2006 LOOK AWRY, KUNSTERNES HUS, OSLO (NO) *
GRIDWORKS, KONSORTIUM, DÜSSELDORF (DE)
- 2005 H29, BRUSSELS (BE) WITH MARCUS BERING
ANDENKEN, STIFTUNG FÜR KONKRETE KUNST, REUTLINGEN (DE)
MOP PROJECTS, SYDNEY (AU)
SNO SYDNEY NON-OBJECTIVE, SYDNEY (AU) WITH KYLE JENKINS *
- 2004 GALERIE CD, TIELT (BE)
E-472C-BSL, HEBEL_121, BASLE (CH) *
- 2003 F218B-BXL, CCNOA, BRUSSELS (BE) *
AMS:WHITE, PS, AMSTERDAM (NL) *
VOLUMES, WHITE-OUT-STUDIO, KNOCKE-HEIST (BE) *
PROXIMUS, BONN (DE) WITH JOAN WALTERMATH
- 2000 TRANSFORMS & CONSTELLATIONS, CCNOA, BRUSSELS (BE) *

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2008 PS 1/MOMA, QUEENS NY (US) CURATED BY PHONG BUI
ANTWERP SCULPTURE SHOW, ANTWERP (BE)
UND 4, CROXHAPOX, GHENT (BE)
I.E., TOWOOMBAA (AU)
MY EYES KEEP ME IN TROUBLE, SCA, SYDNEY (AU)
MY EYES KEEP ME IN TROUBLE, THE PHYSICS ROOM, CHRISTCHURCH (NZ) *
HELLO/GOODBYE, NIEUWE VIDE, HAARLEM (NL) CURATED BY MARTIJN LUCAS SMIT
UNDER THE SURFACE, RC DE RUIMTE, IJMUIDEN (NL) CURATED BY JAN MAARTEN VOSKUIJL
REVISITED, LA SALLE DE BAINS/CAC, LYON (FR) CONCEPT DAN WALSH

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS CONTINUED

- 2007 MINIMALPOP, ARTI EN AMICITIAE, AMSTERDAM (NL)
PAS DE SOUCIS, NOS NON OBJECTIF SUD, TULETTE (FR) *
COMPOSITE REALITIES, CCP, MELBOURNE (AU) CURATED BY DAVID THOMAS
SHIFTING TRENDS: TRANSITIONS OF INTUITIVE ABSTRACTION, SNO,
SYDNEY (AU) CURATED BY KYLE JENKINS
UND JETZT, IS & GALERIE LE PETIT PORT, LEIDEN (NL) *
- 2006 UND, CHIELLERIE GALLERY, AMSTERDAM (NL)
MULTIPLE ART & ORIGINALE, GALERIE ELISABETH STAFFELBACH, AARAU (CH)
& GALERIE IM SCHÜTZENHAUS, ZOFFINGEN (CH)
MINIMALISMS, GALLERY W 52, NEW YORK NY (US)
PAINTED OBJECTS, CCNOA, BRUSSELS (BE)
COLLECTED/UNCOLLECTED, SNO, SYDNEY (AU)
2 STEP, KUNSTERNES HUS, OSLO (NO) & UH GALLERIES, UNIVERSITY OF
HERTFORDSHIRE, HATFIELD (UK) *
TAKE OFF, HEBEL_121, BASLE (CH)
EARLY FABRICATED, TRACER PROJECTS, TOOWOOMBAA (AU) & CCNOA, BRUSSELS (BE)
DELEGET/LEVINE/TILMAN, SONJA ROESCH GALLERY, HOUSTON TX (US)
CONCRETE ZAKEN, NIEUWE VIDE, HAARLEM (NL) *
PANATTERI/TILMAN, COUNTERPOINT, MELBOURNE (AU)
DOUBLE EXPOSURE, CCNOA, BRUSSELS (BE)
- 2005 MINIMALPOP, GALERIE LES FILLES DU CALVAIRE, PARIS (FR) BRUSSELS (B) *
DRAWINGS, SMITHANDERSON EDITIONS, PALO ALTO CA (US)
GROUP SHOW II, MOP, SYDNEY (AU)
N.O.T.3, THE OFFICE, TOOWOOMBAA (AU)
EARLY FABRICATED, PELTON, SYDNEY (AU) & OCULAR LAB, BRUNSWICK (AU)
PAINTED OBJECTS, PS, AMSTERDAM (NL)
MEANS WITHOUT END, GUILD & GREYSHKUL, NEW YORK NY (US)
- 2004 MINIMALPOP, FLORENCE LYNCH, NEW YORK NY (US)
MULTIPLI + ORIGINALI, ARTE CONTEMPORANA AMMANN, LOCARNO (CH)
MOLTI MULTIPLI, CCNOA, BRUSSELS (BE)
- 2003 KONKRET-PRIVAT, GESELLSCHAFT FÜR KUNST UND GESTALTUNG, BONN (DE)
24, EUGENE BINDER, MARFA TX (US) ORGANIZED BY JOHN BEECH
MULTIPLES & ORIGINALS, GALERIE ZIMMERMANNSHAUS, BRUGG (CH)
RAID PROJECTS, LOS ANGELES CA (US) *

PUBLISHED ON THE OCCASION OF THE EXHIBITION

TILMAN



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