

form, color, illumination – Suzan Frecon painting 11.06. – 28.09.2008

A co-production of the Museum of Fine Arts Bern and The Menil Collection, Houston

Mysterious shapes of color

The American artist Suzan Frecon (*1941) has dedicated herself to the endeavor of painting over the past four decades. She feels that the ultimate achievement of her paintings would be the experience that they could cause to the viewer. The exhibition has been installed together with the artist and is a collaboration with the Menil Collection in Houston. After having been represented in group exhibitions at the Museum of Fine Arts Bern in 1990 and 1994, Suzan Frecon's painterly oeuvre of the last ten years is currently shown in a concentrated overview.

Each painting of Suzan Frecon is both rational and intuitive. The compositions of the oil paintings are generated by precise visual measurements and proportions. Watercolors are part of the larger unity of her painting. They use the same ingredients of color, form, material, etc., but are generated more by the irregular proportions and ground material of the handmade papers.

Painting as a "high form of knowledge"

Though non-referential, Frecon's works are not the results of a process of abstraction: Colour is usually the starting point or catalyst. The orchestration of all the other elements constituting the painting, evolves to the ultimate goal, the experience of the viewer. Hence, Frecon considers painting, or art, when successful, to possess an elusive, far reaching knowledge, that is actually "beyond the reach of the viewer". She feels that is precisely the quality that makes it "art". Crucial for the compositions are the asymmetrical tensions and balances, which seem to set in motion the different planes, the background and foreground, the various elements, colors and forms. The modulating of the pigment and the choice of support further enhance this dynamic. Fine linen panels and handmade rag papers from India are surfaces which possess particular capabilities of holding the strokes of paint. Therefore, the surfaces at times seem delicate or gleaming, reflecting or absorbing, always interacting differently to the lighting conditions. Light is extremely important for the painting.

Abstract forms full of associations

Although Frecon's paintings never refer to the immediate reality, her paintings trigger manifold associations. One is for instance reminded of the prehistoric wall paintings in the caves at Lascaux by her earth reds, while the tones of blue and gold seem to be a thread to the Pre-Renaissance. The titles also reflect this ambivalence of non-referentiality and richness of associations "just beyond one's reach". The combinations of words in titles such as "*purple forbidden enclosure*" are as abstract as the painting itself but as a title it lends another dimension to the work. Without suggesting a concrete interpretation, the title adds to the elusive appeal of the colors and forms.

Insight into Frecon's painterly Œuvre

The current presentation has been accomplished together with the artist and is a co-production of the Museum of Fine Arts Bern and the Menil Collection in Houston. Josef Helfenstein, since 2003 director of the Menil Collection and until 2000 vice director of the Museum of Fine Arts Bern, had already included works on paper by Frecon in group exhibitions in 1990 and 1994 in Bern. The present exhibition provides an insight into Frecon's painterly oeuvre of the last ten years.

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Press Release
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The Exhibition

Opening

Tuesday, June 10 2008, 18h30
The artist will be present

Duration of the Exhibition

June 11 until September 28 2008

Curators

The Menil Collection, Houston: Josef Helfenstein
Museum of Fine Arts Bern: Matthias Frehner, Claudine Metzger

Entrance Fee

CHF 14.- / red. CHF 10.-

The Catalogue

form, color, illumination – Suzan Frecon painting

Contributions by Sarah Eckhardt, Matthias Frehner, Josef Helfenstein, Ulrich Loock and Lawrence Rinder, 112 pages, 40 illustrations, ISBN 978-0-300-12552-8, CHF 38.--.

Special Events

Exclusive Artist Talk

Artist Talk: Suzan Frecon and Josef Helfenstein (in English)

Tuesday, June 10 2008, 17h