

# Farbkartografien

## A Context For Experimenting With The Visual

In the beginning is the pigment. More precisely, there are 250 of mason jars filled with painter's materials waiting for future as yet undefined use. Here, a particularly valuable azurite glows, hieratic in the Middle Ages; there, a yet untouched fiery cadmium smolders in its container; there, phenolic resin beads, a powder little known to the lay person, whose velvety quality is released only behind glass.

Not to mention the untinted and elusive substances like powdered glass or silic acid, which Doris Hahlweg adds to her pigment so that her oils achieve a more porous consistency or become more translucent. This battalion of heavily guarded pigments is stored on a multilevel shelf. One can tell from their arrangement that some colours have not been used for some time, others have showed up frequently on her more

recent aluminum backgrounds often in surprising colour combinations. Without the intense smells and especially the reflective process of blending, mixing and adjusting, Doris Hahlweg would only find the correct approach to a painting with difficulty.

The beginnings of a day at work at her studio is best likened to the tuning of an orchestra. In this way, she displays very little of the currently popular practice among painters who take the approach of the esoteric alchemist. As precisely as if she were working in a research laboratory, Doris Hahlweg is able to foresee either the hardly predictable compatibility of colours or an unexpected misadventure.

"I do not usually have any preconceived plans while I paint" she says. "I see how the colour applications relate to each other". She sees painting as an experiment that is difficult to calculate and as a learning process that is never concluded. If a combination of colours suddenly appears dissonant, this will nevertheless fit into her concept. She hates harmoniously orga-

nised areas within a painting, and if anything were to be judged as simply beautiful, it would be removed from the work. If in all of her paintings deliberately arranged contradictions nevertheless develop a wonderfully rhythmic combination of colours which only serves to show how little currently admired polychromatic arrangements need to be based upon traditional norms of beauty.

In the uncharted course of the painter's undertaking, one can glimpse a kernel of truth. In conclusion, behind Doris Hahlweg's pursuit of order lies the eminent wish to approach the truth more closely.

## Painting As An Analytic Process

Regardless of which individual experiment in painting is being considered, certain analogies based on colour harmonies are detectable. One can group several pictures into vaguely delineated working clusters. One can recognize a row of horizontal works arranged in three tones which remind one of panoramic landscapes. On the other hand large areas covered with

opaque tones only reveal windows onto an almost ether-like web of colours. Or some trickles of colour run diagonally across fields of colours just like odd pictorial disturbances through a tableau. And recently, Hahlweg has played around with previously despised contrasts between light and dark in a series of paintings composed of small formats. Who would have ever dared to border an area which looks like fused wood with a wobbly orange-glowing seam of colours dividing it from a geometric mass in deep black?

Relationships between picture compositions also result from Doris Hahlweg often working on up to twenty different colour tableaus at a time in her studio. The layering of her painting requires constant new control in the transparent and opaque parts, which need to be conquered gradually through the rougher or more transparent nature of the material. One tonality which is dominant one day may be eradicated the next day by a different layer of colour or shines through just slightly as a sediment. Hahlweg's paintings have an

unusual decisiveness. It is not the usual spiritual whispers about the act of creation which gives mystery to her artistic display, but more it is derived from a mass of colour. It is important to the artist that in her artwork clear analytical processes are layered over and relate to each other. If one looks at the artwork conceived over the past several years, which are both liquid and lucid, one may forget that a few years ago Doris Hahlweg tended to gravitate toward a more saturated application of pigments. In the course of which the use of effect-grabbing, flickering masses of colour came to be seen as an atrocity to her. In her literally lucid pictures Doris Hahlweg appears to have come closer to an ideal centre of unpretentious maybe even "harsh" painting.

Her pictures do not even try to be a metaphysical or subjective secret. De facto they do not want to project more than what they display materially: fluctuating moving colour forms which lure the eye to wander, disturbed by the unusual constellations.



Abbildung | 18  
1999 / 2000  
40 cm x 25 cm  
Öl auf Aluminium

One reaches the limits of verbal descriptions if one tries to describe one of Doris Hahlweg's pictures in its micro- and macrocosmic colour combinations. She develops a coherent system based on purist colour substance which appears free of any symbolic reflection of meaning. If instead we try to sketch vaguely one of her pictures it only serves to clarify the choreography of the seven to eight layers of colour as an example. For instance, in a painting from 2001 (picture no. 3) which is astonishing just in its extreme lateral format, the intensively coloured ribbons seen from an apparent bird's-eye view find themselves casually woven around each other. First a sunny-lucid yellow, which is layered horizontally by bands of reds mixed with whites. Here and there, a foundation of greenish colour shines or breaks through respectively. Irregularities dominate the already elliptical network. For example a strange flat segment of a picture is projected in

and boldly breaks the view. On the left opposite, an apparent mistake due to being curved, has crept into the woven colour. It is these dialectics, these violations of rules which contribute to the sense of a semi-realistic phenomenology within this already slightly disintegrated system. Doris Hahlweg's colour maps show with their layers and with their (for the naked eye) barely noticeable density of composition the often bizarre pathways of life. On significant crossroads traces of life traverse and undermine each other, in order to finally end in a no man's land of laced layers of oil or to bump into bold territorial borders.

It is not too surprising that Doris Hahlweg's structures of paintings remind one of the unpredictable urban mutations of a mega city like Tokyo where buildings can disappear without warning overnight from the city's topography and only relics of a foundation bear witness to their previous existence.

### Architectural Maxims

Even if these associations to the realistic world reflect a great deal of phenomenological interpretation one cannot deny that a great deal of Hahlweg's painting is based on architectural principles. Especially since painted illusions are avoided as much as possible. Everywhere opaque blocks in the forefront hinder the view to the lower layers of the paintings. If sporadically a kind of three dimensionality is achieved, it is only based on the not always fully controlled dynamic of the colour itself.

The rhythmic composition of the painting appears to be determined by the highly variable picture formats. Doris Hahlweg goes with her coloured areas of movement hard to the painting's border. In our imagination it even appears she has crossed it and thus is comparable to the American protagonist of the Colourfield-Painting movement which has always included the architectural context of the area surrounding a painting.

This becomes especially clear with the smaller works which in an ideal arrangement cover a whole wall in irregular and loosely defined patterns. Doris Hahlweg finds configurations based on architectural principles when she installs ensembles with accentuated references to each other and deliberately included empty spaces. Especially these empty spaces achieve a not unimportant level of meaning as the structures her paintings signify. It is as if Doris Hahlweg tries to achieve the needed visual proof to Derrida's post-structural theses in the 1967 book "L'écriture et la différence". The unsaid, the hidden, the empty space in (visual) vocabulary have – according to Derrida – a level of representation which parallels what is in fact represented and explicitly stated.

"I restrict my media so severely until I am almost unable to continue" states Doris Hahlweg. She steadfastly refuses to follow surface cults as well as any sentimentalism. With good reason, her preferred surface is aluminum which, as a hard surface inhibits a priori a purely suggestive materialism. Doris

Hahlweg attempts to demonstrate in her paintings how differentiated that perception of the always changing environment can be if one has developed a high degree of sensitivity for it.

If she wants to catch a part of reality with her arrangements devoid of any "Aha" effects she likes to counter the mechanism of official advertisements which tend to direct our vision and manipulate it. As soon as one colour process is isolated with the process of sensory perception another filter process is provoked. Her strictly organized picture fugue is organized like a counterpoint analogous to its reality. "Maybe it is our collective memory which forces us to devise counter images to our ordinary aesthetics" says Doris Hahlweg. Who would want to contradict her there.

"Places are recorded as pictures and thus are assigned a new place in our physical memory which is how the early philosophers phrased it" wrote the art historian Hans Belting in the "Location of Images". But the collective memory belongs "inseparably to the individual identity and



Kunst am Bau, Guldeinschule München

turns the individual into a member of its culture which can access pictures from its own archive". In this spirit Doris Hahlweg designs light-colour-time-compositions in which not only the locations experienced through dynamic vision are inscribed, but also the essential substrate of a collective memory are reflected in her painting.

Birgit Sonna

Übersetzung: Dr. Ulrike Wartner