

FORCE MAJEURE

Rayk Goetze

Galerie Irrgang Berlin

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Rayk Goetze's bed is in his studio. It is not his workplace, it is the center of his life. This is where Rayk Goetze gets up every morning as a painter and goes to sleep again as a painter. Surrounded by his paintings, in his own universe. Until the brush falls. Rayk Goetze has painting for breakfast, then he has a shower with it, brushes his teeth with it, and so on. He is in painting up to his shoulders, and swims in it, sometimes disciplined and with powerful strokes toward the goal, sometimes searching, faltering, sinking. The goal of Goetze's painting is fun, enthusiasm, victory, rescue. In this order. All or nothing.

In Germany, anyone who passes through high school is required to read Faust by privy councilor Goethe. School introduces one to art as a trial of strength between good and evil powers, and one is told that it is exactly the same in life. And then one goes out into the world. Rayk Goetze is also concerned with the big issues, and that is a problem, or more precisely: my problem. When I went to high school, I refused to read Faust, the involvement with good and evil, right or wrong, all or nothing. When I approached Goetze's paintings for the first time, I was overcome with a similar defensive reaction, like back then in German class. Just like privy councilor Goethe's Faust, many of Rayk Goetze's paintings are surrounded by an aura of power, meaning, weighty content. I am afraid of these large, powerful narratives. That is my problem. No gods, no masters. I behave ignorantly toward higher powers, and I fear that they will one day pay me back for that.

When Rayk Goetze works in series, and in particular in his blocks of smallest-format paintings, he achieves something very unique and of enrapturing quality. He shows us painting that talks about itself, its history, and its protagonists in the only decent language: poetry. One can approach it directly, without humility, unburdened; one encounters it at eye level.

However, the large format is and remains the supreme discipline of painting, and as a healthy, strong painter, Rayk Goetze is drawn to the large, heavy picture that steps up to win, against all the unimportance, against the meaningless of this world; it comes and shouts: here I am, and I want to stay forever. What shines, is born but for the moment's pleasure; the genuine leaves posterity a treasure. It is a monster; something that shows itself.

Goetze wants to go a step further with every new picture, conquer new realms of painting. Even today, he allows himself to experiment daily for the sake of experimentation, because it gives him proof that he is in a position to reinvent himself time and again as a painter. He sets out on a new quest with every canvas, sometimes with a fine stroke, sometimes as a loudly smacking painting monster. Goetze gets up every morning with the question of what kind of painter he wants to be today, only to fall asleep at the end of the day as the one he actually is, namely a satisfied painter who loses himself in what he does. For which he needs the small formats, because they give him security when he loses himself in the big picture, because he succeeds in producing them almost without exception. They silently and secretly grow in numbers and meaning along with the grand narrative that Goetze seeks in his paintings. Man errs as long as he aspires, the Lord says to Mephistopheles, and I angrily throw Faust by privy councilor Goethe out the window. Rayk Goetze aspires, and that cannot be an error. That is painting out of profound conviction.