

A fresh gust lifts the fabric and passes through the hair of the woman with the mobile phone, while shimmering patterns are released in her immediate surroundings. Impasto, chuckling streams of paint raise to form extraordinary shapes, and fresh painting grounds are rolled into previously unseen surfaces. New creatures, most of them apparently human, are born in a pictorial space that conquers saffron-yellow and azure expanses. Many of these figures are wearing fragmented rags, pink grids, and they are drawn outdoors. It is spring 2017, and an increased pulse rate permeates Rayk Goetze's painting.

The viewer is led into a crafted landscape in which imaginary urbanity, trenchant new creations, and a wealth of detail are wittingly crossbred, causing this painterly world to have evidently developed an active life of its own; indeed, it nearly bursts with vitality. To express it loosely based on Max Frisch: Wherever your gaze settles, it germinates. It is therefore difficult to face this painting with the aid of reason alone; rather, its generative splendor—both qualitative as well as quantitative—rises above rational distance. Instead of being able to comprehend it, it carries the viewer away.

Rayk Goetze's pictorial world has always been situated in the ambitious dualism between figuration and abstraction. The alternation between compact motif und nonrepresentational expression can burgeon into one or the other extreme, so that one finds clear portraits among the works or even purely layered color fields, and many versions of both in the *mélange*. These are now joined by mysterious ornaments, floor mosaics, make-believe structures, and grids, which results in a partial, graphic rhythmization of the pictorial space. The image material is furthermore augmented by floral and animal decorations that are effectively applied to the paintings as foreign stylistics. The color palette has been extended by neon and metallic hues, and there are new paint application and removal techniques, such as, for example, spraying, scratching, paint membrane removal, or the "Lösende Tropfung" (dissolving drip), a Rayk Goetze patent.

Goetze's painting is elevated to the next level of development in the versatile fusion of all of these techniques and elements: what can be seen largely detaches itself from the predictabilities of our reality, as the laws of physics and habit are playfully pried open in the creative act.

In the process, his expression also diverges further from the styles of the antetypes in contemporary painter heaven. Rayk Goetze masterly places figures of various sizes in the square in proportion to one another, but when doing so he does not adhere to a narrowly defined, surreal narrative, such as, for instance, in the Post-Realism, dashed with dry paint, of the likes of Neo Rauch. Exhausting the sliding auto-expressiveness of oil paints, Goetze fosters the unleashed brushstroke; however, he rarely fills the complete pictorial surface with it, such as, for example, Adrian Ghenie. And Goetze's painting technique is highly experimental and in part radical, yet in his case it does not obtain the weight of a material transmitter of gloomy religious messages, as it does in the works by Nicola Samori. All of these characteristics are used in Goetze's pictorial composition under other premises, and numerous personal ingredients on top of that.

Hence his pictorial rhizome always penetrates further hidden areas and makes them visible. The freshly fixed surfaces of this growth, thus the painting, also provide the viewer with insights into the inner upheavals of the work. In view of the vitality and their dynamic connectedness among one another, the paintings suggest stills, arranged snapshots, instead of self-contained "memorial painting." It seems certain that the layers of paint and the figures hold still only as long as someone is looking at them. As soon as you turn away, they immediately begin transforming and multiplying. They are *tableaux vivants* of an expressiveness whose potential brings them to life.

Although it comes across as having been brought to life, there cannot be autonomous painting of course. Hence one that creates and rises above itself. There can only be a painter who succeeds in producing this painting and placing himself in a reflexive relationship to it; a painter who has for years been wandering through his realm of paintings on a daily basis. The longer Rayk Goetze examines his

medium, the more autonomous what he has created becomes. The more different figures, elements, styles, quotes, and techniques Goetze throws into his stretched maelstrom, the more unmistakable his oeuvre gets. The more things from our collective visual memory Goetze subjects to transformation, the more mysterious what is being depicted comes to be.

These are paradoxes that can become effective in art. Fundamental to it is the heightened relationship of tension between the artist and the work. This basically has to do with an increased degree between permitting and controlling that grows out of experience and serves the masterly. The artist can only master the activated potential if he surrenders to the new based on trust in what he has already experienced. Because “[I]f you believe in the world you precipitate events, however inconspicuous, that elude control” *

Put somewhat pointedly, in Western art history the degree of creative control has established itself in two main lines that play around one another. On the one hand, there is the purist concentration on the basics, from Greek Classicism and the High Renaissance to Modernism, as a timeless ideal. On the other hand, the pictorial assumption of an indulgent excess of impermanent beauty manifests in Hellenism and the Baroque to Post-Modernism.

The intuitive temptation of subjective abandon as opposed to a sensuously hybrid splendor is a long known phenomenon in the relationship of tension between these two modes. Antique thinkers already warned of the flowery, flattering rhetoric of the foreign, which they referred to as “barbaric splendour”** ,while they analyzed this beauty at the same time and even used it in doses themselves on the right occasion. “Barbaric”—hence “foreign” in this sense—aims more at the distinction of the familiar Attic ideal of reduction as opposed to a refined and embellished style of rhetoric, and not primarily at the external origin of its original bearer.

By contrast, the captivating opulence in Rayk Goetze’s work feeds on a different source. All of the imagery and the lines of tradition in his painting stem from our Western culture. It is his or her own occidental existence, albeit disassembled into countless fragments, modified, multiplied, and then lastingly regouted, to which the viewer is returned. Like in a dream, the inner foreign waits for us in the fluid borderland between subconsciousness and what one has experienced. Its seductive power is based on the appeal of what constantly emerges from us and is difficult to realize, the principle of spring.

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Translated from the German by Rebecca van Dyck

* Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972–1980*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 176.

** Ernst H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 18.