

SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY

CLARA BRÖRMANN – Aureolen

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There is something magical in the colours. In their glow, their reflection, their connection to light, surface and structure and perception. The closer the brain tries to get to them, the more complex the interplay of biology and physics, nature and culture, the sacred and the profane appears to be. Colour here eludes any clear determination: it emerges between light and matter, eye and consciousness, and thus always refers to a relationship and never to a characteristic of objects. It is precisely this haziness that gives these works their peculiar power, which can be experienced sensually, but not simultaneously be fully grasped intellectually.

All colours are contained in light, only the absorption on the reflecting surface determines the shade. Colours are therefore not characteristics of the world, but interpretative achievements of our mind.

When the light in art lets the body glow to distinguish the spiritual from the physical, we call that a halo, a nimbus, a mandorla, or, especially if it surrounds the entire figure, an aureole. But the halo of light surrounding celestial bodies such as planets, the sun, the moon, and stars, is also called an aureole.

Clara Brörmann subsumes her new works under that title: *Leibliche Blüten* is the name of this group of works. Familiar with how the artist typically treats colours, we see here neither corporeality nor botany; rather, we are faced with shapes and planes, impetus, surface and structure, which inform the abstraction of these works.

But they, too, have grown quite directly from the physical painting process. Brörmann sometimes puts the canvases flat on the floor, primes them, and then pulls the priming off again, thus forcing colour, paint, material to move, become smooth, or break open, and in this way manipulating the diffusion of light and therefore the perception of the sensual experience itself. The result are surfaces that do not just absorb light, but also resist, refract, focus, and diffusely reflect it, causing the beholders' gaze to continuously wander across the painting. Brörmann's aureoles need not mark any bodies: they are the body.

In the San Marco monastery in Florence are the ‚marmi finti‘, four marble panels painted by Fra Angelico as part of his 1450 fresco *Madonna delle Ombre* (Madonna of the Shadows). Writing about these, French art historian Georges Didi-Huberman developed

the thesis that these marblings, in detail abstract, do not just have a merely decorative function, but rather mark the place where painting attempts to figure the unfigurable, namely the mystery of incarnation itself. The mottling of the marble, argues Didi-Hubermann, here functions like a symptom that entices us to interpret. The meaning lies not in the resemblance to something visible, but precisely in its dissemblance.

In Brörmann's painting, too, we find the informal, the blot, a rip, gestural painting. Following Didi-Huberman, we might argue that these gestural treatments come about precisely because the divine, or, in Brörmann's case, the sacred, eludes mimetic representation. Therefore, dissemblance could be more appropriate for the divine than resemblance, because it prevents from the outset a confusion of image and referent. An image that does not claim to resemble God could paradoxically approximate him more closely than one that tries to do that. The image would thus not become a representation of a reality, but rather an occasion of seeing as such.

Through the contemporary colours and the desire for rupture, a deep worldliness inheres in these paintings. The painter is here particularly interested in balance, as well as non-repeatability. The term *aureole* is related to *aura*, and therefore it makes sense to think here of Walter Benjamin and his concept of a unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close it may be. But while the aura is tied to the original, the religious aureole rejects the decline posited by Benjamin. It is dogmatically fixed, repeatable from one icon to the next. Brörmann's paintings are positioned between the poles, closer to decline than to dogma, and thus by and by they unite all the other complexities: light and colour, the sacred and the profane.

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