

Herald St

Markus Amm

Part One

14th April - 29th May 2021

(clockwise from left)

Untitled
2020
Oil on gesso board
30 x 35 cm / 11.8 x 13.8 in
HS16-MA7440P

Untitled
2020
Oil on gesso board
35 x 30 cm / 13.8 x 11.8 in
HS16-MA7438P

Untitled
2020
Oil on gesso board
35 x 30 cm / 13.8 x 11.8 in
HS16-MA7442P

Untitled
2020
Oil on gesso board
75 x 60 cm / 29.5 x 23.6 in
HS16-MA7443P

Untitled
2020
Oil on gesso board
40 x 50 cm / 15.7 x 19.6 in
HS15-MA7194P

'Part One' is the first of two exhibitions by Amm, more details about 'Part Two' to be announced later in the year.

Markus Amm (b. 1969, Stuttgart) lives and works in Geneva.

Recent exhibitions include Spring, Fondation Thalie, Brussels (2021); Seasons, Herald St, London (two-person with Nicole Wermers, 2018); David Kordansky, New York (2018); Kunsthaus Baselland, Basel (2017); Flatten A Wall, Sammlung Lenikus, Vienna (2015); Herald St, London (2014); Variations: Conversations in and Around Abstract Painting, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles (2014); Die geometrie der dinge, Gesellschaft fuer Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen (2013); Only Here - The Federal Republic of Germany's Contemporary Art Collection, Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn (2013); Nothing turned Itself Inside Out, White Flag Projects, St Louis (2013); Actual Fact / Factual Fact, Märkisches Museum, Witten (2012); Karin Guenther, Hamburg (2012); Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Stuttgart (2010); Nothing to say and I am saying it, Kunstverein Freiburg (2009).

Herald St

In his exhibition of new works, Markus Amm turns the canvas into a window onto fluctuating emotional atmospheres. Quiet, luminous, transitional: the paintings suggest a continuum of sensations, in which the viewer almost feels looking as its own form of delight – akin to the afterimages playing behind closed eyelids in a sunlit room.

Amm handles the canvases with dexterity. The highly absorbent gesso board creates a kind of screen onto which the oil diffuses. Rendered as smooth and lapidary as glass, pigment fogging the canvases like coloured smoke.

In their uniformity (the majority of the canvases measure 35 x 30cm), the untitled works glint in the gallery's light-filled white space, jewel-like and fragile. Taken as a whole, the works – alternately translucent and opaque – create an interface between opposing states: 'inside' and 'outside'; form and dissolution. Through this sense of porousness, the undefined achieves its own kind of clarity.

In one painting, a desert-like yellow meets a lozenge of maroon, the canvas bisected by a horizon-like smear of candy pink. It's an augury of serene weather to come ('red sky at night, shepherd's delight'). This palette – startling, playful – recurs throughout the series, from the washes of dazzling fuchsia to the shades of magenta dissolving into purple, mimicking the spread of ink through water.

There are darker, melancholic moments, too. Cloudy indigos and bruise-like mauves hover between autumnal introspection and some warmer zone of feeling. Cerulean breaks through grey like rain clouds clearing after a storm.

Elsewhere, a euphoric note is struck by strobes of amber, red and green: a disco-light aura. In another canvas, the ethereal, gauzy quality of the aurora borealis is conjured as if from frozen Scandinavian skies. Shades of glacial green ribbon into scorching scarlet, before steeply falling away into navy bordering on black. Such combinations of colour riff on nature's very own artifice, and the ways in which such phenomena both inspire and contain the blueprint of human creativity.

This making of patterns – the traces we inherit and leave everywhere around us – is made overt in two of the works: companion pieces in which abstraction finds more definite shape. In one, Amm uses his fingers to streak multi-coloured paint across a milky white background, evoking the tails of small asteroids. In another, the paint is triangulated into bright ribbons – yellow, red, blue – suggesting an attempt at resolution that is also an undoing: the kind of neat coherence that forever eludes us.

Text by Daniel Culpan