

Meyer Riegger

Julia Schmidt
Chromatic Mesh Logistics
30.10.-19.12.2014

Standard, Art, Critique

Economic processes are subject to a complex dynamic. Social, economic, and political reality are always interlinked with one another. A central premise of standard economics is that of an overall economic balance, but since global processes of labor, transportation, and consumption are anything but balanced, this static notion is currently under critique.

An image of a plastic bag is a key subject for exploring the collaboration of production, distribution, and consumption with the means of painting. Plastic sacks are manufactured and distributed by the billions. They come from India, Pakistan, China, or Bangladesh, usually consist of recycled plastics, and serve as packaging for all kinds of products. For her exhibition Chromatic Mesh Logistics (2014), Julia Schmidt paints one of these bags in various versions. In her paintings, the artist changes the concrete appearance of form and color, showing her subject sometimes more, sometimes less concretely: an unshapely plastic bag filled with an indefinable content.

In Julia Schmidt's work, an everyday and simple object becomes the object of a complex conceptual and painterly process. The images are elaborately produced and run counter to a sensible investment of labor. Schmidt recycles her own subject: overpaints, copies, and varies. In so doing, it becomes clear that every product can be subjected to a permanent process of treatment and reuse. Julia Schmidt interprets each of her paintings anew with minimal compositional interventions and thus questions the original character of the individual image. On the other hand, she makes a technique visible that also engages in a use that goes beyond art production. Forms and structures of industrially or mass-produced goods were long ago introduced to the context of fashion and other areas. The contrast between material, function, and de-familiarization could not be any greater.

The production of art is undoubtedly more specific and more highly valued than the work of a mesh worker in the countries mentioned. But in art too, a link is expressed between work, value, and the commodity. In her past work, Schmidt has often explored and included these references embedded in a discourse on images, institutions, or identity. In her new paintings, she refers explicitly to the forms of production and distribution of global economy, thus creating at the same time a link to contemporary art reception. Just like the standard economy, in art there are static patterns of interpretation that describe the link between object, representation, autonomy and critique. But simple equations are not to be had. The path to the concrete object often leads to abstraction, only then to return to the depths of social, economic, or political reality. The aesthetic of images requires a decided analysis of contexts and forms of reception. That art can always be autonomous and embedded, open and critical at the same time, is clearly revealed in Julia Schmidt's new works. The here and now is full of entanglements and contradictions. Plastic bags and painting are concentrically linked like form and content or global production and aesthetic discourse.

Text: Maik Schlüter, 2014
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