

ALMINE RECH GALLERY

Anselm Reyle
Laguna Sunrise

September 07 — October 05, 2017

Almine Rech Gallery is pleased to present Anselm Reyle's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery, celebrating almost a decade of collaboration.

The exhibition presents five large ceramics by Anselm Reyle, along with new bodies of painting.

Monumentally presented on plinths the handmade vases in the style of Fat Lava are larger than life-sized. This way, at eye level, the glazed drippings can be appreciated almost like paintings, and the vases are absolved of their utilitarian status. Individual drippings form layers, the colors flow into each other, sometimes with a marble-like quality, while in other places they emphasize the rough lava-like surface: typical anthracite-colored encrustations and crater-like pores, contrasting the strong colors beneath. The forms of the vases are inspired by forms of original fat lava vases, often reduced in their form.

The term Fat Lava refers back to a particular form of glazing that was developed in the 1960s and is reminiscent of the large pores found in solidified lava flows. These days, however, in professional circles, Fat Lava is now generally associated with West German ceramics from the 1950s to the 1970s, which are characterized by bold colors, striking glazes and experimental combinations using the most varied of forms. After the war, these pieces were for the most part industrially produced – an approach that emerged from the democratic desire for universal accessibility and simultaneously led to an ambivalent situation for the ceramics factories, which now focussed on mass production rather than creating elaborate single pieces. Despite their simplified form, streamlined for industrial production, the vases stood out from other ceramics due to extensive research on new glazing techniques and bold colors, which were applied by hand. In addition to the primarily matt dark Fat Lava glazing, carmine red, bright yellow and cobalt blue are among the colors representative of this style. Contrary to their former semi-industrial origins and short production time, the vases for Reyle's series were created in collaboration with traditional ceramicists due to their size and with highly sophisticated glazing processes.

A notable feature is that all the vases have cracks or deformities in the body or neck. Impressed by Japanese ceramics and the philosophy behind them, Reyle appropriated their appreciation of defectiveness. In accordance with the tradition of Kintsugi, a crack or fracture is no reason to discard a piece – rather, it is to be appreciated and preserved in its imperfection. Such flaws are even emphasized. Reyle staged these accidents intentionally, handling the vases before firing them and inflicting almost exaggerated cuts, dings and dents. This can be seen as an example of Reyle's consciously playful approach to breaking with perfection and straightness. It recalls Reyle's now-trademark splotch, which at the time was applied like a signature to his – especially perfectly executed – stripe paintings.

The large ceramics were the first body of work Reyle introduced after the artist's production and exhibition break of more than two years. The bizarre Fat Lava ceramics have previously appeared in Reyle's work as vases or lamp stands though – these objects, however, were original findings from flea markets and online auctions. The use of found objects of dubious taste is a cornerstone of Reyle's oeuvre. Conceptual references to his so-called African sculptures can also be made. Like the vases, these are based on ordinary small originals, simplified in form and enlarged to multiple proportions. Or the nostalgic farm equipment, which is honored in its formal features and obtains a new level of attention through alienation.

With this exhibition Anselm Reyle also introduces new bodies of paintings. On the untitled works from the series Zen Paintings, a raked pattern draws over the canvas in uniform tracks. The elevations of the lines produced with modelling paste shine in different metallic

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hues. In some parts, geometric shapes are covered with strips of high-gloss chrome foil, some areas have been refined in a traditional technique of applying gold leaf, other parts are lacquered and sprinkled with holographic glitter. The high-gloss finished lines almost appear like three-dimensional chromed parts from tuned car interiors – yet the entire composition recalls quiet Zen garden contemplation at the same time. The acrylic pastes and surface structures draw from the characteristic material canon the artist has developed over the past two decades. The structure pastes, which are commonly available in arts and crafts stores, were used in his gestural Black Earth Paintings, combining art historical references with the figure of "creativity in buckets". In contrast to those expressive gestures of abstract painting, the Zen Paintings show a reduced, controlled and almost meditative form of line. The pattern continuously dissolves, especially towards the edges. Emptiness and density are held in a dynamic balance.

For the also untitled Scrap Metal Paintings, Reyle arranges different forms of metal shavings and other scraps on a black surface that is sealed with a transparent acrylic glass box. The sometimes high-gloss and extremely filigree spirals made of aluminum, steel and other metals are transformed into a subtly three-dimensional drawing, which, depending on the viewer's perspective, lies between raw materiality, unreal depth of field and digital picture noise. The artist transforms the detritus of highly engineered production processes the contemporary material world is based on into valued relics of the same.

A smaller work in the back of the exhibition shows an in Anselm Reyle's oeuvre rather unusual subject – a landscape view in psychedelic colors. At the second glance it becomes more clear that the forest view originates from color flows crossing each other, resulting in forms evocative of trees and a lakeside. The artist made large dripping paintings combining different neon colors and black lacquer, only to discover landscape imagery in the dried structures later on. The moment of coincidence connects to the vases' glazing process, where the result is certainly stimulated, but never fully determinable.

- Annika Goretzki