

# GALERIA HEINRICH EHRHARDT

Imi Knoebel

April 11th - May 18th 2019

From his earliest works, the reading of Imi Knoebel's work has been structured as a critical ontological questioning of image, space, form and colour.

All these questions are maintained in his current work. Through the prism of constant reformulation based on multiple references that the artist makes to his own previous works, revising them, reinterpreting them and repainting them, we could now ask: What comes first, colour or form? What is the true origin or impulse of these irregular forms and extraordinary colours of his new paintings?

If we review part of Knoebel's career, a career full of turning points and critical moments in which everything seems to find its place or starting point, there is one point that is particularly noteworthy when reflecting on this exhibition at the Heinrich Ehrhardt Gallery.

Colour appears for the first time in his work in 1975, introduced within the free form of the heptagon. This combination, which entailed the introduction of new and decisive elements in his work, appears as something necessary and indivisible. He came to colour at the side of his friend Blinky Palermo he chose a green, "the freshest and most beautiful, the most intense and brilliant", and linked it, in an act of creative emancipation, to the free form.

If by his influences he was supposed to choose a primary colour and a regular shape, with *Grünes Siebeneck*, Knoebel did just the opposite. Disobeying the postulates of constructivism and De Stijl, he chose both the perfect colour -or at least that dictated by his desire- and the precise form: the first truly free polygon.

The paintings presented now are articulated under the same system. Colour becomes form, while form is necessarily created through colour. They are inseparable elements and each could not be manifested in any other way. There is no sign of arbitrariness in his choice of forms, no concrete reasons in his use of colours. There is no previous justification or determination but, as in the paintings that make up this exhibition, a fervent drive to use colour, to possess it.

Within the limits of a flexible framework of action, between the sculptural and the pictorial, and in a referential ambivalence that integrates the rigour of the non-objective suprematist world of his early stages and the fleshy splendid forms and brushstrokes of his later works, positions of radicality and resistance are revealed.

Something very similar happens in relation to colour. *Grünes Siebeneck* (1975) implied a 'before and after', while a little later *24 Farben – für Blinky* (1977) created a new, almost programmatic vision of colour. Other versions would follow, such as the first *Menningebilder* (1976), painted with minium, his knife-cut collages *Messerschnitte* (1977), and his famous painting *Rot, Gelb, Blau* (1978-79). From the severity of Malevich, Mondrian or even Newman to Matisse's corporeality.

All these references remain until they lead us to a chromaticism liberated, with an astonishing heterogeneity of visual outcomes.

The assembly of elements as a pictorial method between the image and the object remains key, with different pieces of aluminium joined through fine wavy cuts in some of his new works. The austere purity that obeyed the incorporation of the cosmos in the work gives way to a more succulent sophistication.

The unfathomable, metaphysical abstraction takes on something of the atmosphere of street rock n' roll in Imi Knoebel; above all, he proposes a praising of life, an irrepressible desire to make with one's hands, a celebration of colour and a seductive joie de vivre.