
MARKUS LINNENBRINK – IWANNABEWHEREYOUARE
12 Sep – 31 Oct 2020

We are pleased to present “IWANNABEWHEREYOUARE,” an exhibition of Markus Linnenbrink’s new works. In the 59-year-old artist’s 9th exhibition with the gallery, he continues to use a synthetic palette of supersaturated colors to explore the emotional and psychological affects people experience when we interact with two-dimensional surfaces as if they were three dimensional volumes—and vice versa.

In the old days, painters talked about the relationship between flat, two-dimensional surfaces and deep, three-dimensional space in almost exclusively formal terms—as if all that mattered was how Painting, particularly Abstract Painting, stuck to the surfaces of things (like canvas, panel, and paper), and Sculpture, particularly Abstract Sculpture, dealt with volume, weight, and gravity. The two media were treated as if they were distinct: each doing its own thing—and only its own thing.

That world is long gone.

Today, when more people experience more of reality via the screens of their handheld devices, it no longer makes sense to think that art and life—or two-dimensional imagery and three-dimensional reality—can be so easily disentangled. Every day, over and over again, people all over the globe do not mistake one for the other so much as we see the two intermingle in ways that make it difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction. Fantasy and reality run together. The same goes for truth and artifice, politics and symbolism, reality and its representation.

Linnenbrink’s handcrafted works traverse that slippery territory, boldly and potently and often with abandon. Each cultivates ambiguity by making physical the differences—and similarities—between two-dimensional surfaces and three-dimensional volumes. Included in the Dortmund-born and Brooklyn-based artist’s exhibition are paintings that function sculpturally; a sculpture that resembles a multilayered fragment of dozens of paintings; and a gallery painted to make visitors feel as if they are inside both, which might be a good way to think about the architectural space human bodies occupy—while evoking memories of crowded spaces at a time when that is no longer as commonplace as it once was.

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“IWANNABEWHEREYOUARE” is a super-efficient survey of the various types of works Linnenbrink has been making for the last thirty years. Included are at least one example from each of six types of painting, including his often mural-scale “Drip” paintings; his gem-like “Drills;” his radiantly topographical “Cuts;” his haunting “Photo Drips;” his atmospheric “Encaustic” panels; and his woozy, hallucination-inducing “Reverse” paintings.

The single sculpture, "DONTWANTTOKNOWDONTWANTTOHEAR" adds another layer of complexity to Linnenbrink's sedimentary style of working. Raising questions of trust and doubt, believability and suspicion, the slick spheroid of a sculpture does the opposite of what its title states: It makes you want to know more about how it was made, why it was made, and what it might mean—as well as how all three questions shape the way you understand it, and, most important, your relationship to it.

In a sense, Linnenbrink's installation occupies the opposite end of the spectrum: Rather than seeing tangible layers of bright color sandwiched together in a sphere, you sense colors in the distance, as if seeing them through a thick fog or at twilight. Dim, faded, and vanishing beneath sensuous washes of black and gray Chinese ink, they appear to be far off in space—and in time—but also right there, within arm's reach, on the wall. Vaporous, like ghostly apparitions, and matter of fact, like any room's walls, they evoke worlds both far away and internal, long lost and inside us.

These two works “frame” or “bookend” the paintings in Linnenbrink's exhibition. At once physical and elusive, tactile and evocative, all of his experience-inducing works tug visitors in different directions, leaving each of us free to figure out what that might mean for us—and those around us.

– David Pagel

*MARKUS LINNENBRINK, born 1961 in Dortmund, Germany.
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