

Summary

Max Matter, born in 1941, attracted the attention of the public in the late Sixties with architectural landscapes, using paint sprayed onto "Kellco" formica sheets or onto the curved surfaces of background-lit, perspex skylights - thus attaining his own independent standing in the field of "Swiss Pop" art.

Relationships between the body and the cosmos were put at the focus of attention in the Seventies. The aim was to allow abstract knowledge to be experienced sensuously – as, for example, through the visualisation of thought processes (*Kopfarbeiten, Zur Entstehung von Gedanken* 1982) or the dissection of one's own body into a kind of sewing-pattern (*Körperabwicklungen* 1984).

After a phase of synthesis, the artist began, from 1988 onwards, to combine basic geometrical forms into ornamental patterns and panels - at first by hand, and, from 1991 on, also with the help of a plotter.

Since 1996, he has been working with hypodermic needles using carefully-dosed injections of paint into multiple-folded thin paper, compacted into packets. The "active substance" is injected into a three-dimensional body; the actual "process" cannot, however, be influenced as it occurs in the interior of the packet in an autonomous way - sometimes over a period of several days; the "effect" appears only after unfolding the paper. These works take place at the interface between systematics and coincidence, between geometrical order and open arrangement. Some parts of the work occur in a calculated manner, others defy control. Systemised classification occurs with irritating multiple symmetries whose delicateness can neither be achieved using water colours nor with digital printing. "The opening-up of the canvas, one of the basic demands on art in the 20th century, is achieved here in a headstrong and lapidary way: Not only top and bottom, but also front and back are interchangeable" (Quote by Martin Kraft)

This potential is clearly to be found in a work which can be seen in the Internet.

The original work consists of nine square sheets of paper, each measuring 100 cm x 100 cm. As the paint is injected into the paper, it can be viewed from either side. This means that each sheet can be turned over, rotated and moved into various positions.

The number of variations obtained is thus extremely high. There are $9! \times (2 \times 4)^9$, i.e. about 48.7 trillion possibilities to present this work on a square measuring 300 cm x 300 cm.

Changing three pictures within a tenth of a second would result in an uninterrupted film sequence that would run for 50,000 years without any repetition.

As these injection works show, light is an important factor: These works on/in paper, oscillating between informality and ornamentation, are back-lit in some cases. As a result, the process of colour injection, which both pierces the paper as well as impregnating it, is expressed in a rational way.

The principle of injection is also examined using photographic media: here, it is not a question of inserting colour into white media but the insertion of white light into unexposed colour film material, whose colour potential appears modulated as a result of perforation and the injection of light.

Various methods, experimental set-ups and parameters are applied using change and multiplication so long until the essential structures of processes and materials become evident.

In the artist's works, which were shown in an important retrospective in the Aargauer Kunsthhaus in 1995, the question of the interaction between order and growth is asked again and again.