

## OPAQUE TRANSPARENCY

The works of art in the *Opaque Transparency* exhibition share a number of features. They are monochrome. They provide minimal visual information. They lie somewhere between painting and object. They are conceptual: they question the traditional function and meaning of the painting. They also question the meaning of that which is visible. Therefore, they are above all else visual. They derive from the observation of visible reality and invite observation.

The works do not provide a representation, nor a window onto an outside reality. And although they undoubtedly are fabrications, they show little trace of a maker. They show form, colour, size and material. They are objects, taking up their own place in space. They are what they are. Whoever bides their time in their presence and shifts attentively from red to full black, from aluminium to linen, from minuscule to monumental, will experience that their meaning is simply encapsulated by their very presence. The works are what they are – and yet they are more than this.

But just what does this ‘more’ entail? It is borne by the works’ visual qualities, yet it cannot be singled out for description. It is not the red, yet it is present in the red. It is not the aluminium, although it is conjured up by the aluminium. It is not the size, but still it is caused by the size. This mysterious ‘more’ is the visual meaning of the work, which silently presents itself to us.

You could call it the poetry of the image. It is found in the interlocking of the visual elements and cannot be unravelled in language. It is evocative meaning, open and wordless, yet meaning nevertheless. The blazing of the red, the fragility of the white, the softness of the skin, the touching nature of the size, but also the quiet energy of the labour of love and the smile evoked by a bit of dust trapped in plastic – these features make up the image’s poetry. It exists thanks to the viewer, bringing it to life with his glance, and thus in viewing connecting it to life itself.

So what if the viewer were to renounce all interpretations and associations and simply allow the works to be themselves – would there still be a ‘more’ in question? The answer lies in the manner of observation. The minimal, monochrome works of art seen in *Opaque Transparency* elicit a perception beyond interpretation: a simple reception of what there is, and experiencing that this is precisely where the ‘more’ is located. It is the ‘mystery of things’ referred to by Pessoa. And it is what Master Sessan refers to when he says: ‘That being-as-it-is, with nothing extraordinary about it, nothing wonderful, is the great wonder.’

The bare essence seen in these works cannot be captured, funnelled into representation and language. This is precisely why the works harbour an infinite space, in which the viewer can ‘linger’. They are what they are: a stack of panels, poured plastic, paper tape on canvas. At the same time they detach themselves from their literal being: they allow the mystery of the visible to be experienced. What initially appeared to be ‘nothing’ turns out to touch upon ‘everything’. It is the poetics of the image that lends figure to this mystery: a flaming, dark, delicate, soft, funny or quiet one. It provides a human scale to the ‘everything’ and allows us to connect to it. This brings us ever closer to the meaning of the ‘more’ involved. It is the wonder of the presence of things that shows itself when – beyond language, representation and thought – we simply relate to and allow ourselves to be touched by that which presents itself.

In relating to the things which are visible, something else also occurs. We not only learn something about the things, but also about ourselves. We find ourselves briefly freed from our idle chatter and bits of knowledge (even about art), our opinions and prejudices. We are with what is – and what is reflects us. Eye to eye with these works we become all too human *and* we become part of something greater than ourselves: the ‘more’. To put these things into words is a sensitive matter. It is better to speak not about this – but to experience it, on an everyday Monday afternoon in Paris, straight out of the bustle of the metro and rush of the streets, in a gallery filled with quiet, intent works.



*Opaque Transparency* is a wonderful title for the exhibition. The works are opaque: material, present. They are what they are. And yet they manage to relinquish their material nature: they are transparent. Their meaning is contained in what there is to be seen while simultaneously transcending what is to be seen, far beyond everything and patiently present in the things, as no-one said so well as Rilke.

The materiality of the works and their transparency transport us to that which can be experienced in life yet remains unnameable: the silent meaning of visible things. Philosophers have long pondered whether this unspeakable meaning rightfully exists. To artists this goes without question. Making the mystery of the visible something to be experienced, time and again, is their very reason for persevering.

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