

Place of Reflection in the Space of Gisela Zimmermann

by John Austin

Gisela Zimmermann is an intense surface-worrier, a segmenter of planes and no wonder: her paintings are bold experiments in the structuring of space without using the regular emphasizing the traditional methodologies applied to the surface. Using acrylic paint applied so as to signal the greatest amount of surface tension spread out against the pictorial planes, the artist's paintings are ethereally vibrant. In its place she has made as the theme of her work an investigation of the underpinnings, the structural support surfaces of her pictorial spaces.

The analytic and the spiritual in her paintings are kept in harmonious balance as the artist deploys coloristic structure to demarcate passageways and container edges of her spaces. In effect, artist's images are vestigial ones on the verge of the cusp between meltdown and metamorphosis --- a liminal state that resists identifiable locus. If we were to look at these works closely we are immediately struck with their ambiguity --- as if these works were testing the eye and challenging it with what it can see (or not see) over time.

Color, permeability and structure are the hall marks of Gisela Zimmermann's works which exemplify the imagination taking flight. Here, the eye finds a type of plenitude in the scattered, an organized distribution of light and paint that is yet still, somehow enclosed, held in check, totalized and grounded by the systematized matrix horizontals found in each painting, each of which is buoyed by a saturated sense of indeterminacy as counterpoints to the center.

The result is an intense experience which visually insinuates a presencing of an incipient expansion principle on the verge of filling pictorial space. At the same time as this transcendent intention is felt and seen, an antithetical intentional painterly aspect comes into play. An anti-illusionism is now evident; the physicality of the painter's brush strokes heightens the materiality of the pictorial plane as well as the facticity of the artist's working procedures offering a distanced, conceptual reading to the work.

Gisela Zimmermann's paintings are intriguing as they are held in a state of suspension between two conditions: at a remove from transcendence while allowing the viewer to participate in what might be considered a perceptual aspect of transcendence through the use of boundless infinities of color expanses. Thus, this layered presence and anti-presence in each abstraction itself furnishes the idea of an enduring present, the contrast between change and the unchanging, between time and eternity. In effect, the artist is deeply immersed in delineating for us, the viewers, what she perceives as an elemental condition of life, which finds its equilibrium through an interior force of counter-harmonies in a space that has become a place for private reflection.

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