



HORST GLÄSKER

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Horst Gläser – Pinseltanz

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The spellbound moment. Or the gradual production of the picture from the action

It all begins with the action. It is from movement that Horst Gläser evolves his work: a furious dance, now free and circling, now following wild rhythms. Trusting in the unrestrained form of the action which gives free rein to every intuitive fantasy, rules out every preconceived plan, and leaps over motivistic preconceptions and structural limits, Gläser succeeds in producing a work that transforms, in often protracted operations, the traces of the eruptive genesis into elaborated, independent imagery.

The monumental pictures, whether on canvas or paper, draw us into their hallucinating sway. Gläser transports us into a foreign, endlessly open and alluringly beautiful world of panoramic dimensions. We seem to immerse ourselves in a cosmos full of dynamic vortices of colour and form that extend over the entire painting. Gläser's abstract panoramas undoubtedly master the compelling power of illusion by simulating a close affinity with nature and reality "within our grasp". What we see, however, what details we in fact perceive of that endlessly distant, or perhaps very close, world remain peculiarly unresolved. Despite the immediacy of the scattering, fragmented shapes in the most magnificent, brightly shining, colourfully iridescent shades, they appear far removed from place, time and all other earthly dimensions. Are we looking on the primeval chaos? Or is it the promise of some future galactic bliss? Those who voice such questions will look in vain for answers in the pictures. Nor will they find there any clues allowing conclusions to be drawn about an authentic world, an explosion or a catastrophic event in reality. Even the substance of the dynamic formations that characterise the pictures remains undefined. This multi-dimensional openness in Horst Gläser's large-scale tableaux is what unsettles us and leads us back to the painting itself. In surprising contrast to these space-seizing formations of colour that burst the confines of the canvas, Gläser's painting never breaks out into expressive gestures and informal sweeps of the paintbrush. Nothing is left to chance — after the initial anarchic action has rendered its service. As the image is generated, it becomes more and more of a composition in which the mastery of space and the harmony and balance of form and colour, and consequent refinements to obtain the desired effect, are all important. Such a sublime and sophisticated claim to affect the viewer reaches its full potential precisely in an art which is well thought out, carefully composed, and technically precise in its execution.

sublimen Beeindrucksanspruch findet seine volle Entfaltungsmöglichkeit gerade in einer Kunst, die wohl kalkuliert, sorgfältig komponiert und technisch präzise gesetzt ist.

Gläser is a past master in dealing with the cunning subtleties of awareness. We become witnesses, even accessories, to a performance that seems to evolve directly yet elusively before our very eyes. One vortex superimposes its shape on another until the erupting waves cover the entire space. We are drawn spontaneously into the whirl of the current, our senses reeling, The illusion of the momentariness of the representation — "the spellbound moment" — succeeds perfectly. It is impossible not to become emotionalised by these cosmic scenarios! And yet: the heightened awareness, the quality of the eventfulness that enthral its viewer, is the outcome of an experimental, carefully executed procedure.

By analogy with Adam Bartsch's "le peintre graveur", Horst Gläser could well be termed "l'actioniste graveur". For Gläser devotes himself to graphic art as an action artist who investigates its particular techniques and approaches with an eye to their actionistic potential. And his investigations are fruitful. For the actual printing procedure now becomes Gläser's act of physical appropriation, assimilation, incorporation. Gläser, like none before him, has re-formed graphic art, developed and revolutionised it. A new dimension has come into being: action.

Gläser relishes action. On this basis, he could easily be slotted into a modernist tradition with its striving for renewal in art through the deliberate exclusion of reason and the target-oriented artistic strategies that are subjected to it. This is as true of the Surrealists in the early 20th century as it is for their successors in American action painting, the Tachists and informal painters through to the Actionists and graffiti artists who, motivated by a kind of mistrust of decadent, over-intellectualised Western culture, presented supposedly "preconscious" primitivisms and "subconscious" automatisms. Gläser, however, his primal action, which he calls Pinseltanz (brush dance), performs only the act of generating the image in the studio before devoting himself to a series of carefully planned and coordinated artistic steps. The relic of the action — a length of paper painted during the dance in wild gesticulation with a long-handled China or bristle paintbrush — then gradually given rise under Gläser's artistry to a picture. The finished work (and the paintings are as space-rupturing in their dimensions as the works on paper) preserves the essence of the dancing action. The Big Bang has found an artistic echo and it appears purified and transformed by being worked on and medially transformed in so many stages. If that were all, then action and picture would be on a level, and the question as to the meaningfulness and proportionality of the complicated transformation process would end there. The finished work, though, is anything but the mere translation of an action into painting or graphic art. Nor is it intended to be a snapshot of the dancing eruption. Yet if it is not painted action and not energetic movement transposed into painting, what is it? As with all good art, it is about art itself. The action is a move against the snares and toils of painting. Seen from this perspective, it emerges as a radical act of (self-) liberation from the conventions of traditional painting, with the work only subsequently being transposed into a primary process that generates and develops into the final picture.

Fascinating as it may be to trace the stages in the action, working from the final picture back to the turbulent Pinseltanz, it is Gläser's sophisticated pictorial art and not the meticulously sensitive creative process that holds the essence of his artistic statement and its valid form. The monumental works reveal scarcely a hint of the process that led to them. So, interesting as the path to the finished painting — described here for the first time — may be, it remains essentially in the background of these overwhelming and compelling pictures.

The vast sweep of Gläser's work, his venturesomeness and artistic mastery are extremely impressive, quite breathtaking. The unusually wide horizontal format (1.62 x 9.80 m) captures our entire imagination with an irresistible immediacy. We seem to be submerged, or rather: we are absorbed, soaked up by powerful vortices of brilliant, gaudily dazzling colour whose origin, nature and own dynamism are as unfathomable as the depths they shine from. The world that opens up before our eyes in such an awesome manner reveals neither its whence nor its whither. It seems incorporeal and endless. A touch of uncertainty even hovers over it: does danger emanate from it, or can we plunge happily and without hesitation into a longed for "ocean feeling". This fundamental lack of definition is the means of heightening to an extreme the tension and the thrill of Gläser's work.