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Schiess, Adrian, *Malerei*, 2004, Autolack auf 8 Aluminiumverbundplatten in diversen Formaten, Diverse Formate, Privatbesitz, 2005

Documentation level

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Name

Schiess, Adrian

Dates of birth and death

* 3.8.1959 Zürich

Municipality of origin (CH)

Zürich

Nationality

CH

Brief biography

Maler. Fotografie, Video und Aquarell

Fields of activity

Malerei, Aquarell, Fotografie, Video, Kunst am Bau

Lexicon article

1975–1976, foundation course at the Zurich School of Design. 1976–1980, apprenticeship as a graphic designer. 1981, 1985 and 1988, Swiss Federal Art Scholarship; 1983, scholarship from the City of Zurich; 1988, grant from the Canton of Zurich. 1996, prize from the Stiftung für die Graphische Kunst in der Schweiz (Foundation for the Promotion of Graphic Art in Switzerland). Key exhibitions (selection): 1990, Aargauer Kunsthaut Aarau; *Venice Biennale* (Church of San Stae), 1992, *documenta IX* in Kassel; 1993, ARC/Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; 1994, Kunsthalle Zürich; 1996, Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva, and Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz; 1998, Kunsthaut Bregenz; 2001, Neues Museum, Nuremberg; 2004, Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Villa Merkel, Galerien der Stadt Esslingen; 2007, Indianapolis Museum of Art. 2008–2010, Le Parvis centre d'art contemporain, Ibos, Musée national Fernand Léger, Biot, and Musée d'Art Moderne, St. Etienne.

1993, first on-site artwork in the SUVA building by Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron in Basel; 1996, colour concept for the Davos Sports Centre by Annette Gigon and Mike Guyer. Since then, the artist has created colour concepts for projects such as the Zurich University Library rebuilt by Santiago Calatrava, 2004; the Brunnenhof housing development, Zurich (architecture by Gigon/Guyer), 2007; and the Information Science Laboratory of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (Hönggerberg), 2008. Adrian Schiess lives and works in Mouans-Sartoux, France.

In 1984, Adrian Schiess arranged painted planks and blocks on the floor of the Kunsthalle Winterthur. A year later, he laid torn pieces of painted paper over each other in the Shedhalle in Zurich. The outlines of his early works often appeared to be coincidental, and as late as 1987 there remained pieces of colourful chipboard that, although frequently approximately the shape of a rectangle, have irregularly cracked edges. The form of other works – which besides panels also include cuboid wooden blocks – is more precise, and has since become the rule.

In 1990, Schiess' *Flache Arbeiten* (Flat Works) were presented on a large scale at the Aargauer Kunsthaut Aarau for the first time: precisely cut, rectangular panels in identical format were laid on top of squared timber and arranged in rows. Reflected in the surfaces, which were painted with beige, grey and reddish car paint – mostly monochrome, but some also in graduated colours – the surrounding space also became an integral part of the installation. The same year, similar works could be seen in the Church of San Stae in Venice, where they created an entirely different effect in combination with the baroque architecture.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Schiess started to experiment with a new type of support, replacing chipboard with sheets of aluminium, on which car paint shines even more brightly. The move to industrial painting proved to be a logical development and improvement of Schiess' working methods: the paint was now sprayed by specialists, and the artist's contribution was reduced to selecting the colour and determining the size of the sheet. For the new Davos Sports Centre, which opened in 1996, Adrian Schiess merely designed the colour concept: in its implementation, the boldly coloured surfaces are combined with the severe, compact structure designed by architects Gigon/Guyer.

In art-historical terms, Adrian Schiess' *Flache Arbeiten* occupy a curiously intermediate position. While the serial aspect and the industrial production point to minimal art, the handling of colour continues the tradition of monochrome painting. However, this classification is undermined by the *Fetzen* (Shreds), created in parallel, which consist of

irregularly torn, brightly painted pieces of cardboard that reject the concept of the picture.

Since 1994, Schiess has supplemented these two groups of works with large-scale, multipartite *Abstract Photographs* printed on panels, which he integrates into his floorscapes. As in his painting, he is interested here in different textures and surfaces. This also applies to the video works created in 1989 and in the mid 1990s – with the difference that the colour gradients are not only filmed, but digitally generated using special software, producing a kind of immaterial painting. Reflecting the «digital painting» onto the floor panels creates a circular system, a reflection of the picture – both within the picture and as a picture in its own right.

Since 1999, Schiess has created small-scale, mostly horizontal-format pictures with the character of objects from a variety of materials, to which the artist applies several thick layers of paint, or squeezes the colour directly from the tube onto the support. Even if these pictures bear titles such as *Himmel* (Sky), *Schnee* (Snow), *Mimosas*, *Coucher du soleil* (Sunset) or *Mondlicht* (Moonlight), the focus is not on their illustrative character, but on the materiality of the paint. Adrian Schiess constantly seeks to push the boundaries of painting by reflecting on the idea and the practice of the medium and calling into question the definition of pictures as objects.

Works: Aargauer Kunsthaut Aarau; Basel, SUVA building, 1993; Bignan, Centre d'Art Contemporain du Domaine de Kerguéhennec; Buffalo (USA), Albright-Knox Art Gallery; Carquefou, Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain des Pays de la Loire; Davos, Sports Centre, colour concept, 1996; Dijon, Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain, Région *Bourgogne*; Geneva, Musée d'art et d'histoire; Kunstmuseum Luzern; Marseille, Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur; Nuremberg, Neues Museum, Staatliches Museum für Kunst und Design; Paris, Fonds national d'art; Kunstmuseum St. Gallen; Kunsthaut Zürich; Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich; University of Zurich, library, colour concept, 2004; Zurich, Brunnenhof housing development, colour concept, 2007; Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich (Hönggerberg), Information Science Laboratory, colour concept, 2008.

Marco Obrist, 1998, updated 2012
Translation: Toby Alleyne-Gee

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References

[Collaboration Adrian Schiess & Annelies Štrba](#)

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