

Christian Heinrich: Transformation

Kirsten Schwarz, Art historian at the Museum for Contemporary Art, March 2015, Siegen

Paper is the basis material of our knowledge and our creativity. We read, write, paint and draw on paper. Maybe the material paper that surrounds us everyday, and is always available, will actually be replaced by its digital form. In that case will we miss it? Quite certainly the artist will miss it, the ones who are inspired by its material characteristics like Christian Heinrich.

The direct association of paper as an artistic material enables the possibility of complex multi-layered creations other than the sole use as grounding. Artistically paper normally serves as an undercoat and remains in the background, it builds the necessary carrier material for the artist to build his work on. Certainly for the artist searching for completely new creative possibilities, its revealed when he attempts art made from paper. With paper you can fold, crease, crumple, tear, cut, stack layers, glue, moisten, roughen, burn and perforate it. Both this destructive and constructive process nevertheless show directly to new astonishing appearing forms of the material paper.

A great deal of it had already been tried out by Christian Heinrich since 1995 when he discovered paper as his artistic form of expression. In a shop in New York he found a large selection of hand created paper from around the world, and made from the most unusual materials such as elephant dung. The appearance of each paper is individual, the surface structure, the colour, the texture distinguishes itself and gives this unique own characteristic. The isotropy makes out the particular stimulation since every fibre is subject to a coincidental alignment, resulting in a subordinate mixture which displays the stimulation of a haptic perception. Christian Heinrich uses all of these characteristics and underlines them in his picture objects. In spite of manifold deformation and arrangement the structure remains and thereby the characteristic of the material is always preserved. The dimensional and transformation possibilities in the processing of the material are unequally greater than by pure painting. Through the protruding relief resemblance, layer forming, tearing, ripping, wrinkling or pressing, characterize this tactile part of the work process.

From its original two dimensional level surface, through relatively simple actions, paper becomes a three dimensional form. Surfaces of diverse structures are created, that Christian Heinrich additionally works over by impregnating it in oil, or painting it with glue to subsequently apply colour, a covering top coat or glaze. One could say an artistic lamination, but thereby the process still isn't finished. The formed structures now get roughened, scratched, smoothed or scraped. The picture becomes a palimpsest in which the viewer can read like a geologist through a cut in the structures of earth's layers. Transitory processes become readable. Difficult to decipher meandering, marbling, delicate ramifications come into being, or translucent structures which makes the viewer inquisitive and entices him to an in-depth inspection.

The contents of the works sway between abstract surface treatment and associated landscapes. Blue areas in the upper picture section, earth tones in the lower section. The resulting notion is a view in the landscape without you being able to name a certain place. However at the same time you will also always be confronted again and again with the material, since the contours of the changing surface formations and the frayed edges recall the conditional property of the paper. On several occasions Christian Heinrich visited South Africa and the American South West, whose light conditions and landscape tones appear

totally different to those of Central Europe. This play of colours is taken up in several of Christian Heinrich's works, and added into his expressive dimensional style. He sees his own intention in the bundling of memories, impressions and feelings without however becoming too specific with this atmospheric charge. Leeway remains for the viewer's own association.

The colour builds the last layer in the complex work process and at the same time the viewer's first entry to the picture. Christian Heinrich prefers pastel tones, earth tones and harmonic colours without strong contrast. He employs the colour in order to emphasize the material, here the colour doesn't stand in the foreground. One finds metallic accents which have an effect of shining stars next to plain materials such as jute. The eyes are torn back and forth between the surface structures and the coloured fields. Block-like earthbound forms lie next to elements which lose themselves in the painting, or are strewn wafer-thin and weightless, light as a feather. Every surface has its distinctiveness and together they build a harmonious thought through composition. The way to abstraction, so formulated by Christian Heinrich himself, liberates from the accustomed visual structures. The form-finding and the ensuing treatment of this characteristic art on its own creative ductus style leads to an individual picture expression that is refined again and again allowing one to continue his thoughts.

There are over 3000 kinds of paper known world-wide. One hopes that Christian Heinrich will further more manage to create unexpected and astonishing art out of paper, and not only on paper.