

David Malek, 'Binaries'

February 19 - April 10, 2020

Opening reception February 18, 2020, 6-8 pm

RIBORDY THETAZ is pleased to present 'Binaries', David Malek second exhibition at the gallery.

These paintings take the title "binary" from their simple composition - a solid figure or an outline delineated on a gray or blue ground. In appearance, the equation is indeed very simple. Standard format canvases (162 x 130 cm) have a succession of geometric forms placed in their centers. Worked and reworked with industrial enamel paint, they seem to have been embedded within the canvas itself, or to radiate forth from it. That is what these binary paintings are until you potentially take a photo of them with your telephone and reduce the contrast. Surprisingly in some of them, the colors and their luminous interaction cancel themselves out and when the contrast is reduced, only a uniform gray surface remains. The duality of these images only existed for an instant in the retina.

Within the series, however, it is all about persistence - retinal persistence. And the way in which these forms imprint the membrane of the eye after they have passed through several regimes of reproduction and which contributes to further abstract their contours. Before inscribing itself on the surface of the canvas, this blue circle was a photograph of Pluto taken by a deep-space probe, an image that David Malek saw in a documentary on his computer screen on arte.tv. That fluorescent pink disk is a sunrise perceived during a transatlantic flight equipped with blue liquid crystal portholes that modify our perception of the atmosphere. These abstract forms are lifted from the intimacy of our screens, which link halos from the furthest reaches of space, to the proximity of ancient architecture that continues to exhibit the formal repertoire of bygone age.

These canvases disprove the idea according to which the retina has a memory of a tenth of a second. They suggest rather that the persistence of pictorial abstraction through time is fed by traveling and the recycling of motifs - from the pagan iconography of Egyptian gods to the futurist imagery of science-fiction (such as the solar disk or a pyramid rising from the horizon), medieval architectural motifs taken up with the aesthetics of electronic music. This phenomena of the cyclical reappearance of motifs applies itself to

David Malek's artistic practice, in which motifs return like so many resurgences, like strobes in the deployment of a continual research on abstraction.

If the large formats intimate to keep you at a distance in order to better apprehend them, I personally advise you to approach them so that your eye can caress their velvety surfaces, and see the leavings of color that remain around the figures. David Malek completes his paintings in a research of perfection and tension that is necessary for a dialectic between the figure and the ground. Interdependent and contradictory, they must synthesize themselves in the eye and in the mind in the form of a third element, a color or an image that does not belong to either postulate by itself. And, while these geometric figures are linked to esoteric imagery, the search for perfection takes on a spiritual aspect. The continual effort in the production of these canvases comes to resemble a kind of asceticism. The artist paints these figures in the way that one daily executes yoga postures, tirelessly repeating the same gestures in the aim of approaching an ideal equilibrium. This series of nine canvases radiate the color and the energy of the way they were made, they have arrested the image of a repeated gesture, of a retina that is perpetually impressed.

Elsa Vettier, February 2020