

Herbert Alexander Basilewski
N.F.A. (Not for all) -
Relativität der Gleichzeitigkeit
30.9. – 26.11.2023

~~#~~notforsale

Spitalstr.18, Basel
Keller / Basement
-1 UG | -1th floor

Permeable permanence

„Relativity“, which adheres to all paintings by Herbert Alexander Basilewski (*1958 in Wagenhoff, D) through their titles, refers to a complex physical phenomenon. According to the relativity of simultaneity, no single answer applies to all viewers with regard to the question of whether two events occur at the same time but different places or happen at different points in time. In a free modification of this principle, two basic statements can be derived that prove valid in terms of the production, but also the reception of Basilewski's paintings. On the one hand: No viewer sees the same as another at the same time. On the other hand: No viewer sees the same thing at different times. And this last crucial sentence, which also refers to the artist in his time-intensive interaction with his work, seems to convey the essential tension inherent in Basilewski's art.

His approach is characterized by the intense restlessness and nervousness of a field researcher or explorer facing an unknown territory, who catapults himself into the wide open, self-provoking and willing to take risks, caught between active advance and tense observation, opening up the ample field of diverse painterly possibilities in a constant dialogue with the emerging layers of paint that are perceived as a kind of changing environment. „The canvas starts talking to me at a certain point, but also contradicting me. It sounds strange, but it is a kind of invitation to act. An eternal back and forth.“

Beyond the illusionistic depiction of reality, Basilewski explores the dimensions of the pictorial space in a dynamic interaction, systematically examining the indefinite realm through color, structuring and shaping it in the process. The decisions taken are the outcome of a profound questioning of painterly fundamentals so that the elements introduced follow intuitive motivations. For example, the framework of strong straight brushstrokes in blue, partly placed at right angles to each other (Relativity 3) creates a solid supportive frame like the beams of an architectural construction. Against this ultramarine and cobalt blue structure, slight traces of delicate turquoise lines appear like calligraphic loops, enigmatic characters that appear to be random notes or loosely interspersed comments. Nothing is obscured or hidden by the artist who is carried away in his creative flow. All remains open and transparent. The smooth interpenetration of foreground and background, subtle shifts in layers and qualities, alternating between concentration and dissolution, stay visible. Each painting is a permeable membrane that is perfused by the regular rhythm of an even breath that joins all areas, areas of strong intent as well as of faltering doubt. Basilewski's work seems to comprise studies on synthesis, which openly probe the connections and transitions between the pictorial elements. At the same time it analyzes the inconsistent relationship between artist and work. Therefore, the pictorial arrangements displayed do not claim to be absolute, but always evade permanence, remaining relative, depending on

the perspective taken, on a single point in time and place.

On the surface, where the viewer's gaze seeks to attain a stable hold, painting manifests itself as an open, unsteady process in which earlier and later marks coexist on an equivalent level and the unfulfilled potential of pictorial invention is preserved. „It is essential for me to keep the painting process going. Here, color values jump from one canvas to another and dance cryptically across the surfaces“ (Basilewski).

In accordance with his elastic, multi-perspective approach, Basilewski's compositions elude spatial and temporal definition. The combination of layers of paint and textures seems compliant with chemical forces of attraction and repulsion, even tectonic turbulences that, as in geological shifts, can always completely change the picture. In order to face such imponderabilities and to be able to react (spontaneously) to these surprises, Basilewski needs to move freely. He adheres neither to the singleness of perspective nor does he allow the linear chronology of painterly events between beginning and end to constrain his range of action.

In Basilewski's exploration of the essence of painting, it unfolds in multiple variations to reveal the metaphysical search for meaning of an artist who, through the use of color, tackles the fleetingness of the painterly moment and strives for permanence. Basilewski's compositions can be perceived as formations that invariably remain in motion. They are created by the artist moving around between several canvases in a flexible process. The groups Relativity 1 – 6 and Relativity 7 – 10 are not produced serially one after the other, but simultaneously side-by-side, as if the painting action spreads out and overcomes the limited single formats. In the coexistence of painterly marks from different phases, the temporal planes coincide. Thus, in Basilewski's work, the relativity of simultaneity „has more or less to do with the presence of the past and the present ...“ (Basilewski)

Bettina Haiss, Cologne, 2023