The Extended Field of Painting
Roman Kurzmeyer, 2009

One unmistakable feature of contemporary art is the immense variety of its modes of expression. With varying degrees of intensity, the concept of art has progessively been extended ever since the early twentieth century, literally stopping at nothing, not even at human beings. A few years ago a musician and an artist sent out invitations to the birth of their child in a Berlin Gallery. Just a few months ago the Belgian artist Wim Delvoye – who had already caused a stir with his tattooed pigs – announced that he had found a person who was willing to have a picture of him tattooed on his back. The pigs were tattooed, fattened and slaughtered in China; their skins, with tattoos of famous logos from the fashion and culture industry, are now for sale worldwide through the art market. The tattoo on the young man's back, executed by a well known expert in the business, was also put up for sale, giving the buyer the right to have the skin removed after death and treated and preserved as a lasting picture. Is this merely art's cynical riposte to an insatiable art market? Over ten years ago, the American art historian Rosalind Krauss talked of the 'post-medium condition' of contemporary works whose makers liked to pretend we are living in a 'post-medium age'.[1] In her view this is perfectly and problematically exemplified above all in installation art. At the same time, however, it is also evident – as we shall see in detail here – that much of the work made under the auspices of a post-medium art praxis, even if it is 'intermedial' and draws on a number of different media, still relates to the traditions of one medium in particular.

Polly Apfelbaum, Katharina Grosse, Bruno Jakob, Adrian Schiess, Christine Streuli, Niele Toroni and Duane Zaloudek, whose work is on show in *Boden und Wand/Wand und Fenster/Zeit* at Helmhaus Zürich, all regard their work as painting. Yet the works on display are not only paintings; there are also installations, videos and objects, new and older pieces, side by side in the same exhibition space. The artists themselves are from Europe and America, and from different generations, but they have a common interest – as this essay will show – in what might be called delimited, trans-medium, abstract painting.[2] The term 'transmediality' is used to describe the 'transition from one medium of expression to another' and constitutes a specific form of 'intermediality'.[3] And it is the shift from one medium to another, or from one semiotic system to another – not the outcome of this shift, but the transfer that is effected or highlighted in the work's reception – that is the hallmark of transmediality. Trans-medium painting overcomes the conventional limitations of the material and, by referencing other media, by engaging in 'medium transfer',[4] as Roberto Simanowski calls it, focuses on painting itself.

1 Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, London 1999, p. 20.

2 Of the earlier projects that pursued a similar line to this one, special mention should be made of the exhibition *As Painting: Division and Displacement* presented in 2001 at the Wexner Center for the Visual Arts in Columbus, Ohio, which was very important for the situation in the United States. More recently, the exhibition *Space Invaders* at Kunsthaus Baselland, Muttenz and Basel, 2005, paid particular attention to the relationship of painting and space.

3 Roberto Simanowski, 'Transmedialität als Kennzeichen moderner Kunst', in Urs Meyer and Roberto Simanowski, Christoph Zeller (eds.), *Transmedialität: Zur Ästhetik paraliterarischer Verfahren*, Göttingen 2006, p. 43.

4 Ibid., p. 80.

In *Boden und Wand/Wand und Fenster/Zeit* – a relatively small yet representative selection of contemporary art – the aim is to evaluate the current relevance and validity of certain Modernist ideas and to explore the role and significance of abstract painting in art today. And, in keeping with a topic that also takes account of the space within which an exhibition is held, this presentation of various positions in abstract painting also focuses on the exhibition as a medium in its own right. What can an exhibition achieve? What is the viewer's experience of the exhibited works? And are these experiences also shaped by the way the works are presented? The title of the exhibition is an indication both of the programme of the exhibition and, by implication, the nature of the works on show. All kinds of relationships arise here between floor and wall, wall and window. These constitute the physical setting for artistic interventions, are directly addressed by the exhibits, and in the ensuing interplay with the exhibits become a specific space to experience abstract painting. 'Specific' in the sense that the works on show are either oriented towards the zero point of painterly representation – and, as such, owe their existence to processes of minimization – or they are the outcome of quite the opposite kind of processes.

Colourfield, Minimal Art, Anti-Form and Concept Art have all played a major part in the changes that have affected notions of art and of artistic work since 1945. In 1973, looking back at the New York art scene between 1966 and 1972, the American art critic Lucy R. Lippard even spoke of the 'Dematerialization of the Art Object'.[5] And the German art historian Hans Belting, in his discussion of art since the 1960s, has talked of the tendency 'to drive art out of exhibitable works'.[6] Since then ideas can also attain the status of a work of art. At that stage in art history, the instrumental characteristics of a work of art came to be valued in their own right, as is still the case in Western art – a development with consequences that are still widely underestimated. The works selected for this exhibition reflect the uncertainty that now surrounds artistic 'ideals' and demonstrate possible ways of pursuing abstract painting in light of and recognizing the developments that have informed postwar Modernism.

Many postwar, Modernist artists have continued to pursue the processes of reduction set in motion by the classical avant-garde; others have responded to the proclaimed zero point by maximizing painterly means. Very different qualities have shaped each other: much and little, loud and soft, eloquent and silent. The inner logic of these developments comes to light in this exhibition where the works themselves constitute a visible dialectic of plenitude and emptiness, information and redundancy.

I

The work of Niele Toroni exemplifies the new beginning that emerged in painting in response to the European Concept Art of the 1960s. Born in 1937 in Locarno-Muralto, Niele Toroni has lived in Paris since 1959. Since 1966 he has followed the same procedure for all his work: using unmixed, water-soluble industrial acrylics he makes imprints of a no. 50 paint brush, repeated at regular intervals of thirty centimetres, on a variety of picture supports, although usually straight onto a wall. Painting becomes an elemental, repeatable, self-reflective act that is nevertheless precisely locatable in space and time. The imprints are not formed by means of a moving brushstroke, as such, but by precisely laying the two sides of the brush flat against the wall, one after the

5 Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, London 1973.

6 Hans Belting, 'Zum Werkbegriff der künstlerischen Moderne', in idem, *Szenarien der Moderne: Kunst und ihre offenen Grenzen*, Hamburg 2005, p. 67.

other. The brush is not used as a painting tool, for it simply leaves an 'imprint' of itself. The execution of the work cannot be delegated, although the actual procedure might seem to suggest this. Toroni explicitly regards himself as a painter, not as an artist. This in itself has far-reaching consequences for his work, which I shall return to in due course.

Toroni's first public demonstration of his new working method was in January 1967 at an exhibition of the artists' group BMPT. This group, which consisted of Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier and Toroni, was only active until autumn of that year. Toroni's closest artistic and personal contact in the group was Parmentier. He only got to know Mosset and the latter's work shortly before their group exhibition.[7] As Toroni has himself pointed out in conversation, BMPT was only important to him insofar as the group's exhibition provided him with his first opportunity to present the method he had developed in 1966. Before that he had been painting gloss, lozenge patterns on linoleum. Very few of these works have survived, and there is just one in the artist's own collection. From this painting, it can be seen that he often started painting the field with a brushstroke. Toroni's method was not based on any theory, as might very easily have been the case in the conceptually-inclined 1960s; rather it was the radicalization of a praxis where the brush mark is merely regarded as the starting point of painting and ultimately – as a modus – became the pictorial motif. That first exhibition with Buren, Mosset and Parmentier at the Salon de la Jeune Peinture in the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris was openly opposed to the notion of artistic inspiration. At the opening of the exhibition, a message from the artists was repeatedly relayed by loudspeaker, urging people to become intelligent. In these circumstances painting delivered a form of institutional critique and, in so doing, pointed to a current in art that was widely to take hold in the coming years.[8] The American artist Michael Asher was one of the pioneers in this area. To this day, Toroni promotes the cause of painting that is contemporary in its structure and methods and, remarkably enough, is highly critical of what he sees as the conventionality of the notion of 'the work' in most new art, which – as he sees it – only ever moves forwards in terms of its contents.

II

The American artist Jackson Pollock played an important part in the development of postwar painting and of notions of pictorial composition in particular. In his large-format drip paintings of the late 1940s dense structures obscure the painting process as such, that is to say the sequence and layers of the paint application, and as a consequence negate any relational structures within the painting. These compositions 'materialized' the picture and, in the words of Regine Prange, made it 'conclusively untransparent'.[9] The outcome of this 'all-over' technique is a static picture that points to a distinctly mobile, gestural mode of painting. The American critic Clement Greenberg, an early champion of Pollock's work, talks of 'flatness' as a defining quality of painting since Abstract Expressionism. He discusses this in his essay 'Modernist Painting' (1960): 'It was the stressing of the ineluctable flatness of the surface that remained, however, more fundamental than anything else to the processes by which pictorial art criticized and defined itself under Modernism. For flatness alone was unique and exclusive to pictorial art. The enclosing shape of the picture was a limiting condition, or norm, that was shared with the art of the

7 Niele Toroni in conversation with the author, 12 July 2008.

8 Hal Foster et al., *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, London 2004, p. 520.

9 Regine Prange, ',Jack the Dripper' oder Pollock und ,The American Sublime'', in *kritische berichte* 1/1993, p. 37.

theater; color was a norm and a means shared not only with the theater, but also with sculpture. Because flatness was the only condition painting shared with no other art, Modernist painting oriented itself to flatness as it did to nothing else.'[10]

Pollock's reception was crucially shaped by the photographs Hans Namuth took of him painting. In these shots the performative act, during which the painting is created, proves to be the mainstay of the pictorial process, and the authenticity and existential dimension that are attributed to this process serve to legitimize this new notion of painting. Namuth's photographs not only capture the artist's concentration and precision, they also show that the painting is the outcome of processes that are primarily about physical space. The painter moves around a canvas lying on the floor. He is seen working on a plane that is no longer to be read in the traditional manner as a window, but that is now a real place where the work is enacted. The foundations for this new notion of the picture go back to the nineteenth century, as Greenberg shows, to the French painter Edouard Manet, who expressly incorporated the canvas, as material and as a plane, into his compositions: 'Manet's became the first Modernist pictures by virtue of the frankness with which they declared the flat surfaces on which they were painted.'"[11] Moreover, by incorporating the flat surface into the picture, Manet also laid bare in the painting the nature of the canvas itself, namely its outer limits. As the French philosopher Michel Foucault has put it, Manet thus invented the 'picture as an object', presenting it in its materiality as a coloured object that is illuminated by an external light source and that the viewer can move in front of and around.[12] Looking back at Manet's painting today, it embodies a feature that is not merely central to modern painting, as Greenberg has suggested, but that has been crucial to art throughout the twentieth century, namely, the widening or extension of the concept of art. This in turn is inextricably linked with the 'dismantling of the existing systems of genre'[13] that began in the nineteenth century and was carried through to its conclusion during Modernism. However, the place once occupied by traditional modes of representation and artistic genres, that imitate and perpetuate social norms and values, was not replaced during Modernism by a new order, but rather by a wealth of new artistic possibilities: 'In this century few artists were to spurn the notion of the independent determination of different work modes by the author in question, the reflection of the medium and personal experience.'[14] The art historian Gottfried Boehm talks of a 'change in the fundamental legitimization of artistic activity', which has led to the situation where artists now place an entirely new emphasis on the medium of expression and on artistic activity per se.[15]

Any mention of the 'picture as object' immediately calls to mind the work of Donald Judd who started life as a painter but whose artistic experiments in the early 1960s led him to a form of art that was to be neither painting nor sculpture. Besides producing his own art, Judd, who had studied Art History under Meyer Schapiro at Columbia University, was also active as an art critic in the years 1959–1965. His essay of 1964, 'Specific Objects', begins with the words 'Half or more of the best new work in the last few years has been neither

10 Clement Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting,' (1960) in *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–1969*, ed. by John O'Brian, Chicago and London, 1993, p. 87.

11 Ibid. p. 86.

12 Michel Foucault, 'La peinture de Manet', conference paper delivered in Tunisia, 20 May 1971, first published in *Les cahiers de la Tunisie*, Numéro spécial: *Foucault en Tunisie*, Tunis 1989.

13 Gottfried Boehm, 'Bilder jenseits der Bilder: Transformationen in der Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts', in *Transform: BildObjektSkulptur im 20. Jahrhundert*, exh. cat. Kunstmuseum und Kunsthalle Basel, 1992, pp. 19f.

14 Ibid., p. 17.

15 Ibid., p. 20.

painting nor sculpture.'[16] Judd's reservations regarding painting and sculpture are explained by his own situation as an artist at the time. He criticized the painting for being 'a rectangular plane placed flat against the wall' but he also observed that the artists of the New York school, such as Newman, Still and Rothko, were treating the painting as a 'thing'. What did he mean by this? These artists were emphasizing the picture surface as an entity, where the inner elements were simple and corresponded to the outer edges. But the wall is also a plane. And – particularly in Stella's case – the relationship between the picture and the wall was to become optically dominant, and the painting developed a new spatial association. Like Greenberg, Judd was exercised by the flatness of the new abstract painting, but his observations led him to very different conclusions. Representational iconography had no part in his work. Judd was seeking to continue along the path that the generation before him had set out on, and he believed he would find this in a form of art that was prepared to abandon 'flatness' and instead seek the answers to painting in the third dimension.

For Allan Kaprow, his own invention – the Happening – was the next step in the direction that Pollock had taken with his paintings. Like many before him, in his famous book on Pollock, published in 1958, Kaprow concentrated mainly on what had already become known as his 'action paintings'.[17] A few years after the publication of this study of Pollock's importance for contemporary art, in his book *Assemblage, Environments & Happenings* Kaprow returned to the history of this new art form that had largely removed the differences between various modes of representation.[18] Since both Environments and Happenings have installational, spatial features, it was perfectly natural that Kaprow should decide to explore the relationship between art and architecture. During the course of this, he particularly focused on the dependence of art on the structure of the building around it. In order to visualize this connection, as Kaprow said, one only had to imagine a screen without the cuboid space of the room and a flat wall or a chair on an uneven floor. For, as he continues, it is hardly surprising that the curved walls and spiral ramp of the Guggenheim Museum in New York had initially had a deeply unsettling effect on artists and critics alike. At the same, Kaprow's view of the history of painting also led him to the conclusion that the flat surface of the painting was intrinsic to the process of painting establishing its difference to the area around it, which in turn is crucial to the symbolic dimension of the painted picture. As Kaprow sees it, this need to constantly reinstate this uncertain relationship to reality is one of the most fundamental yet troublesome tasks of painting. Harriet Janis and Rudi Blech have recalled the circumstances surrounding what turned out to be the first Happening: 'Kaprow's exhibition was ready to open. He looked around and saw nothing but pictures on the walls, and was filled with something like despair. He started to hammer picture supports into the walls around the paintings, he then pulled strips of painted canvas down from these, cut and with holes bored into them. Now, in order to see the pictures, you had to peer through ripped curtains. Then, anxious that this was all rather too simple, he placed light bulbs between the curtains and the pictures and fitted the electricity supply with an automatic switching device that made the bulbs light up at different speeds and with different levels of brightness . . . and so painting-as-environment was born and, with that, the Happening.'[19]

16 Donald Judd, 'Specific Objects' in *Complete Writings 1959–1975*, Halifax 2005, p.181.

17 On this see Jeff Kelley, *Childsplay: The Art of Allan Kaprow*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 2004, pp.18f.

18 Allan Kaprow (ed.), *Assemblage, Environments & Happenings*, New York (1966), pp.151f.

19 On this see Rolf Wedewer, *Räume und environments*, Cologne and Opladen 1969, pp.21f.

The use of the term 'intermedia' for those postwar works where the concept involves two or more media, as in the case of Robert Rauschenberg's 'combine paintings' for instance,[20] or two or more art forms, as in the case of the Happening, goes back to Dick Higgins. In his essay of 1965, entitled 'Intermedia', he recalls the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who had already used the term in this sense in 1812.[21] The decisive step on the way to the view of art shared by Kaprow's generation was the Cubists' invention and artistic implementation of the collage. The inclusion of fragments of things from the real world in the composition of a painting – in defiance of the customary flat, painted surface – turned it into a painted 'thing'. Painting no longer exclusively portrayed objects in space, it could become just such an object itself. And Clement Greenberg lived to see these developments. In his late essay, 'Intermedia' (1981) once again he comes across as a keen observer of the New York art scene, even if he was not persuaded by these new forms of art.[22] Greenberg describes how New York had opened its doors not only to installation art, sound art, action art, performance, videos and dance, but also to various forms of the written and spoken word. He then goes on to explain this openness to and acceptance of inter- and multi-medium art forms partly as a consequence of the leading role of the visual arts in the renewal of Modernism and partly as a consequence of the different notions of quality and modes of reception introduced by the growing middle-class audience for art and culture. By now, of course, inter-medium or multi-medium art – with its long history rooted in Modernism – has become the dominant art form. The Belgian art historian Thierry de Duve distinguishes these new art forms from Modernist forms, and describes them as 'generic', that is to say, 'art that has severed its ties with the *specific* crafts and traditions of either painting or sculpture'.[23]

III

From today's perspective it seems odd that Greenberg, who lived through and witnessed Modernism, apparently did not register the dialectical relationship between reductionism and the 'deregulation' of the arts. Is intermediality not a direct consequence of the Modernist processes of reduction that led the artist to the empty canvas and the invisible picture? In 1962 Greenberg wrote: 'Under the testing of modernism more and more of the conventions of the art of painting have shown themselves to be dispensable, unessential. By now it has been established, it would seem, that the irreducible essence of pictorial art consists in but two constitutive conventions or norms: flatness and the delimitation of flatness; and that the observance of merely these two norms is enough to create an object which can be experienced as a picture: thus a stretched or tacked-up canvas already exists as a picture – though not necessarily as a successful one.'[24] What the picture is missing is painting, the application of paint. In 1967 the American artist John Baldessari expressed this ambivalent relationship to painting very much in the manner of that time, when he showed a white canvas with the words 'EVERYTHING IS PURGED FROM THIS PAINTING BUT ART, NO IDEAS HAVE ENTERED THIS WORK'.[25]

20 On the early work of Robert Rauschenberg see Walter Hopps, *Robert Rauschenberg: The Early 1950s*, exh. cat. The Menil Collection, Houston 1991.

21 Dick Higgins, 'Intermedia' (1965), in *Horizons: The Poetics and Theory of Intermedia*, Carbondale and Edwardsville 1984, pp. 18–28, here p. 23.

22 Clement Greenberg, 'Intermedia', in *Late Writings*, ed. by Robert C. Morgan, Minneapolis 2007.

23 Thierry de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*, Cambridge MA and London 1996, p. 205.

24 Clement Greenberg, 'After Abstract Expressionism' (1962) in *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4* (as note 10), pp. 131–32.

25 See illustration in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (eds.), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, Cambridge (MA) and London 1999, p. 64.

In the 1960s, the process of progressive reduction finally led to the conceptual picture. A new potential field of activity for the artist was the concept of art, which was determinedly being extended at the time. Ever since arriving at that zero point, art has been advancing in all sorts of different directions. This ongoing evolution of new pictorial forms is also – and specifically – evident in the paintings made since then, in the very same medium that had such fundamental doubt cast upon it in the 1960s when Modernist painting temporarily came to an end.

The Swiss artist Bruno Jakob (born in 1954), who lives in New York, developed his work at this interface specifically by means of invisible materials such as water, energy, light, air and thoughts. He already made his first 'invisible paintings' in 1968 at his parents' farm. Even before he became an art student he set up a studio in the attic at home where he could paint and draw. A piece of white-grounded cardboard from that time – 'painted' by energy alone – still survives; Jakob regards it as one of his earliest works. While he was painting and drawing, this white cardboard was not far away. As he was painting he found that by intensely observing it, by looking at it with deep concentration, it was possible not only to imagine pictures but to actually see them on its blank surface. Although of course many painters before him have had the same experience, the difference is that Jakob subsequently decided not only to accept these pictures and retain them as 'invisible paintings', but also to deliberately pursue this direction in his work. In 1969 he started painting with water, initially only on blotting paper. In 1973, in the printing works where he was employed, he found a roll of transparent sheeting which he has since kept like an exposed but not yet developed roll of film full of hidden images. And he came up with all sorts of ways of developing his work in this vein: in 1976 he put sheets of paper out in the rain so that they could 'represent themselves', or he would leave paper out in the fog. He placed sheets of paper on an ants' trail and, with a pencil, traced the route of individual ants that came and crossed the paper. In his garden he left the composition to flies and midges by marking each spot on the paper where they momentarily landed. He even tried to draw the rain. In those days, his pictures did not have solid picture supports. He would paint on plastic sheeting and remove the layer of paint once it had dried. His rolled and folded pictures on cotton were made using a combination of techniques (painting, spraying, blot prints). The painted cloths were then rolled and exhibited as partly rolled or as folded pictures, so that the image was not fully visible.

At a very early stage, Bruno Jakob had already developed an interest in things invisible, hidden, latent, lost, unrealized and unrepresentable, and has worked on these aspects of painting ever since. At the same time, he has also never ceased picturing the world and representing ideas. Thus, although as yet little account has been taken of this side of his work, he has made figurative drawings of himself painting, and videos of situations where he pursues his work as an artist. On occasion, it is perfectly possible that, somewhere in the middle of the town, Jakob might be painting on paper with water or dabbing flowers in a mountain meadow with morning dew with one hand while, in the other he has a camera to video the area where he happens to be working on a painting. These tapes, of which a selection is on show in the exhibition, document moments in his life and the simultaneity of different events, one of which may be painting a picture. One's mind turns to John Cage, who had different compositions performed simultaneously in what he called an indeterminate event.[26] In performances by Bruno Jakob, his videos are often shown uncut,

26 On John Cage see also 'John Cage über die bildenden Künste', in Richard Kostelanetz, *John Cage im Gespräch. Zu Musik, Kunst und geistigen Fragen unserer Zeit*, Cologne 1989, pp. 124–39.

presenting the viewer with a realtime sequence. He also paints in public, often executing a number of pictorial processes in parallel, sometimes altering the aggregate state of the means at his disposal, for instance by creating steam from water during a performance and then using the steam as a paint substance. Cage took the view that one of the main tasks of contemporary art – as he understood it – was not to engage with oneself and one's own feelings, but to open people's eyes to the world and, in so doing, to change their view of it; Bruno Jakob takes a very similar view. For Leigh Markopoulos the importance of Jakob's work lies in his radical critique of the trust in visual evidence that is so deeply rooted in our culture.[27]

Bruno Jakob recently commented that, as a painter, he was concerned with neither the present nor the past, for he was searching for a form for the future.[28] As he sees it, his works ought to be able to accommodate the future. His work is not merely about pictures, but also about painting in its own right and as a physically independent entity. So far his aesthetic praxis has involved physical contact with the picture support, regardless of whether he was working with water, touch, energy, light, air or thoughts. Now he has taken a radically new step, and in his contribution to the exhibition at Helmhaus Zürich he is investigating whether it isn't also possible to execute a painting remotely? In one room there is an installation with moving pictures by Jakob; meanwhile he will be in New York, painting the walls of another room with his thoughts. However paradoxical this may seem in light of this particular intention, his work is above all visual, although it may appear to be the opposite. Jakob's painting is neither abstract nor non-representational nor conceptual, nor does it develop its own symbolism. On the contrary, as drawings, paintings, photography, moving pictures, performance and architecture it is directed towards the viewer and, by dint of its open structure, invites viewers to question their relationship to the things they see. The visible components of Jakob's work have their roots in the conventional characteristics of pictorial works and thus lend credibility to his painting as a focused activity.

It is not by chance that the empty, grounded canvas does not exist as a readymade in the œuvre of the painter Marcel Duchamp, although the idea may easily have suggested itself to him. The reason is the generic, rather than specific, view of art, that forms the basis of all his work.[29] Bruno Jakob's invisible paintings, like Imi Knoebel's *Keilrahmen [Stretcher]* of 1968 – and unlike the work of Marcel Duchamp – is part of the tradition of specific art. Thus it would be misguided to describe him as a concept artist. Yet without the Concept Art of the 1960s, his painting could not be perceived as art and would be nothing more than materials. By in fact using invisible means of painting, Jakob establishes a link between Concept Art and painting. According to the American philosopher Arthur C. Danto, 'the deliberate rejection of a mode of representation implies a rejection of a whole way of relating to the world and to men. . . .'.[30] In terms of Bruno Jakob's work, this would mean criticising the picture-maker for retreating behind his working methods, and it would also mean casting doubt on the structural openness of his painting and, by definition, on his painterly praxis, that sees every single work as a form of potential, that uses the pictorial process to direct it towards the future and to shape it as a sounding board for the viewer's response.

27 Leigh Markopoulos, 'Bruno Jakob', in *A Brief History of Invisible Art*, exh. cat. Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco 2005, p. 44.

28 Conversation with the author, 20 August 2008.

29 On this see Thierry de Duve (as note 23), pp. 249f.

30 Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, Cambridge MA and London 1981, p. 50.

IV

It would be a serious misreading of Modernist painting if one were to treat individual works as no more than potential solutions to traditional problems of form. At the same time, however, it would be equally wrong to conclude from the fact that contemporary artists use a whole range of different mediums that painting really had come to a halt in the 1960s, when all that seemed to be left was the paint surface, that's to say, an empty canvas. The ease with which artists today avail themselves of all sorts of mediums has to be matched by a more highly differentiated response to their work. This by definition includes the question as to whether – in this multi-medium age with its pluralist concept of art – it is not, nevertheless, still possible to distinguish between works in light of their roots in painting, sculpture or the moving image? To what extent do Bruno Jakob's videos, Duane Zaloudek hat-objects made from paper, Adrian Schiess's painted panels or Polly Apfelbaum's coloured fabrics, carefully arranged on the floor – to name but a few examples in this exhibition – address issues inherent to painting? To what extent, returning to Thierry de Duve's distinction, are these works 'specific' and not 'generic'?[31] In this connection and with reference to Greenberg's writings on Modernist painting, Stephen Melville has suggested that 'The thought one might begin to have is that the internal possibilities of a medium are not fully or adequately thinkable apart from some reflection on the other mediums with which it is in relation.'[32]

In this exhibition we have set out to discover whether, despite their 'intermediality', the works on show have their roots in sculptural or painterly issues – or, more than that, whether they might not actually be sculpture or painting, even if they would no longer qualify according to traditional criteria. For this investigation certain conditions have to be fulfilled. For instance, we have to rethink the term 'medium'. Unlike Greenberg, Krauss does not restrict its meaning to the unworked technical or physical support – in our case the paint surface – but instead insists on the 'internal plurality of any given medium',[33] which implies not only its material nature but also the possible articulations and procedures associated with it.

Of course painting was never immune to the wider developments in art in the twentieth century. Marcel Duchamp is visibly inscribed into contemporary, abstract painting. Dieter Schwarz puts this very well in his essay 'Über die Möglichkeit mehrerer Farbtuben' ['On the Possibility of Several Tubes of Paint'], in which he also discusses the work of Niele Toroni.[34] Schwarz first recalls an interview Duchamp gave in 1968 and cites him as follows: 'A readymade is a work of art without an artist making it, if I may somewhat simplify the definition. A tube of paint that an artist uses has not been made by the artist; it comes from the manufacturer who makes paints. So in reality the painter is making a readymade when he paints with the manufactured item that we call paint.'[35] In the present context it is interesting, and Schwarz makes a particular point of this, that Duchamp wanted painting to be understood as an expression and reflection of the historical conditions of production. In contrast to monochrome, non-representational painting where painting comes into its own as a material and which could therefore be regarded as the conceptually strictest realization of Duchamp's thinking, in Toroni's work there is

31 Thierry de Duve (as note 23), p. 205.

32 Stephen Melville, 'Counting/As/Painting', in Philip Armstrong, Laura Lisbon and Stephen Melville (eds.), *As Painting: Division and Displacement*, exh. cat. Wexner Center for the Visual Arts, Columbus, Ohio, Cambridge MA and London 2001, p. 17.

33 Rosalind Krauss (as note 1), p. 6.

34 Dieter Schwarz, 'Über die Möglichkeit mehrerer Farbtuben', in Siegfried Gohr and Johannes Gachnang (eds.), *Bilderstreit: Widerspruch, Einheit und Fragment in der Kunst seit 1960*, Cologne 1989, pp. 209–18.

35 Ibid., p. 209.

no more than a latent, open connection between the paint and the ground. Each continues to exist independently of the other: 'One after the other, or one next to the other, Toroni makes his brush imprints, creating a work that can never be regarded as a single object. When he is showing his imprints, Toroni never tries to turn the elements he is working with into a single entity, and even when the imprints are contained within an architectural framework, they point back to that architecture, and the figure dissolves again into juxtaposed imprints.'[36] Toroni does not regard his method as a conceptual, artistic process but as painting, that he must execute in person although the work does not present any obvious opportunity for personal, subjective expression. Yet exactly this is also its strength. By consistently, and gladly, asserting his rights as the author of this simple, repetitive painterly act – which could so easily be delegated – ever since 1967, using a new brush and a new tin of paint each day, and throwing these away at the end of the day, each time he embarks on a new work he manages to re-open the question of the conditions of production in a highly industrialized society that relies on the division of labour.

Numerous artists, above all from the postwar period, have turned the spotlight on paint, creating pictures that are no longer intended to be shown flat on a wall. In these installational or object-like works, the main focus is on the painted surfaces. And they demonstrate painting's capacity for self-renewal. The American artist John Chamberlain has followed what is, in many respects, a significant path. He takes painted metal panels, forms these into coloured bodies and compresses them. Judd was quick to recognize and describe Chamberlain's innovative treatment of surfaces and colours, and the painterly aspect of his assemblages. What was it that intrigued him about these works? In his essay of 1964, mentioned earlier here, he writes: 'The composition and imagery of Chamberlain's work is primarily the same as that of earlier painting, but these are secondary to an appearance of disorder and are at first concealed by the material. The crumpled tin tends to stay that way. It is neutral at first, not artistic, and later seems objective. When the structure and imagery become apparent, there seems to be too much tin and space, more chance and casualness than order. The aspects of neutrality, redundancy and form and imagery could not be coextensive without three dimensions and without the particular material. The color is also both neutral and sensitive and, unlike oil colors, has a wide range. Most color that is integral, other than in painting, has been used in three-dimensional work. Color is never unimportant, as it usually is in sculpture.'[37] Dieter Schwarz has taken up this thought and has developed it to explore the role of the material in American postwar art. He talks of the precedence given to object-like components and materials that have their origins outside the suggested space and that must have some connection with the real space of the viewer. 'The preference for facts rather than ideas is not a formal strategy, for it has recourse to ethical foundations, to real life, rather than any art-historical genealogy.'[38] Crucial to this reading of Chamberlain's works is the fact that these are not merely painted objects but works that are formed from painted metal panels. These are fully three-dimensional pictures with as many aspects as this would suggest.

36 Ibid., p. 217.

37 Donald Judd (as note 16), p. 183.

38 Dieter Schwarz, 'Plane/Figure: Begriffliche Anmerkungen', in *Plane/Figure. Amerikanische Kunst aus Schweizer Privatsammlungen und aus dem Kunstmuseum Winterthur*, exh. cat. Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Düsseldorf 2006, p. 130.

V

Duane Zaloudek, born on a small farm in Texas in 1931, has lived in New York since 1973. In the period 1980–82 he created around twenty hats from watercolour paper, most of which are displayed on a wall in his own apartment. They are made from a high-quality English paper which he bought cheaply as a job lot when the factory ceased production in the late 1970s. Zaloudek formed them on a professional hatmaker's block that he had found in the street. At the time he was having to contend with an eye illness that he initially found almost impossible to deal with. It was extremely difficult for him to see his own abstract paintings, which were in any case bordering on invisible. Working in the studio was similarly difficult. These circumstances prompted him to work instead with three-dimensional objects, and hats in particular, in a style that was still worn in his native Texas but not in Manhattan. At this stage in his life Zaloudek was earning a living as a construction worker, and had full confidence in his own craft skills. He sprinkled some of the hats with sawdust that he had brought home from work. A friend, the painter Bill Copley, bought one of these works. Zaloudek has never before exhibited these three-dimensional watercolours. In 1968, when he was still in Oregon, he worked on Environments that were only ever seen in one exhibition; the three works in question were multi-part structures made from white, green and brown sheets of Plexiglas. Photographs of these have captured a central quality of his Environments, that is to say, simultaneously to show and to hide, to connect and to separate. Before moving to California in 1971 he destroyed these works instead of, as originally planned, realizing them in glass so that they could be put on permanent display outside. Zaloudek returned to painting. The white-in-white paintings that he has been making ever since are both challenging and time-consuming to view, for they explore transitions between the visible and the invisible. In the 1980s Zaloudek started to exhibit installations of works on paper. He made wooden boxes in which he not only stores, but also exhibits, these watercolours. They are presented open, on a metal table designed and constructed by himself, with matching chairs for viewers to sit on. In Europe Zaloudek was soon known as a 'radical' painter.[39] A core element of his work is the perception of a picture and, as a consequence of the presentation of his paintings within installations, of oneself as viewer, perceiving the work. The pictures not only make one conscious of the process of perception; they are also designed to lead the viewer to a more differentiated perception of him or herself. Zaloudek is a painter. He is fascinated by surfaces and the space that these can reveal to the eye. His use of watercolour paper that has to be treated with water before it can be worked into an object and that remains recognizable as such, allows these objects to be classed as painting.

Polly Apfelbaum, born in Abington, Pennsylvania in 1955, also lives in New York. Apfelbaum and Zaloudek first met during the preparations for this exhibition at a supper in New York, at which Bruno Jakob was also present. Polly Apfelbaum paints, cuts, folds, arranges and stacks textiles, above all synthetic velvet. In the early 1990s she also worked with coloured paper which she presented in rolls in a cardboard box (*The Color of My Fate*, 1990/2003) or shredded, sorted by colour and shown in large sacks (*The Dwarves with Snow White*, 1992/2003).[40] Since 1992 she has used dye to colour the fabrics. She chooses to work with synthetic textiles not only because of the particular qual-

39 On the history of 'radical' painting see the catalogue text by Beat Wismer for the exhibition *Radikal auf Papier* curated by himself at Aargauer Kunsthaus Aarau in 1990, exh. cat. unpaginated.

40 See Stephen Westfall, 'Formalism's Poetic Frontier', in *Art in America* 1/2004, pp. 70f; *Polly Apfelbaum: Installations 1996–2000*, exh. cat. Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine 2000, pp. 10–13; *Polly Apfelbaum*, exh. cat. Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2003.

ities of these fabrics, but also for reasons of content. Unlike canvas or cotton, the initial connotations of velvet are luxurious clothing and furnishings rather than painting – heavy curtains and opulent upholstery in grand villas, dark evening wear and candlelight. Real velvet is a soft, supple, warming, seductive fabric, and it is expensive. But Apfelbaum buys cheap, synthetic velvet, thereby connecting with popular culture.[41]

In 1996 Apfelbaum started to show large-scale floor pieces made from textiles. Although these works may call to mind Minimal Art and serial works, they in fact consist of hundreds of different elements, individually cut and dyed. As the artist herself apparently once said, she draws with scissors. On other occasions she will roll dyed-soaked fabric around cardboard tubes (*Bones*, 2000) and exhibit the rolls like a store of hidden pictures. Not unlike Adrian Schiess, to whom I will come next, as a painter Apfelbaum prefers horizontal surfaces to the wall, and works with expansive coloured fields. In their structures, ornamentation and colours, her works are reminiscent of carpets – an optical comparison that readily springs to mind, but does little to help us understand them. Besides the element of obsession apparent in the sheer amount of cut, dyed and systematically laid out pieces of fabric, and a sense of colour reminiscent of Matisse, these works are characterized by their evident precariousness and above all by their impermanence. The notion of latency is central to understanding Apfelbaum's art. Unlike a carpet or Matisse's late paper cuts, the countless elements that make up her works remain unconnected. It is the nature of the work that at any moment pieces could be displaced causing overlaps, disorder and destruction. Polly Apfelbaum describes these works that can be reconfigured for every presentation as 'fallen paintings'.[42] This verbal allusion to the Fall from Grace hints at the artist's own sense that she has used the means of painting to 'illicitly' foray into a realm that is usually the preserve of classic Minimal Art.[43] Apfelbaum meticulously lays out systematically organized coloured fields and in so doing creates an indefinable realm for her works that is somewhere between painting, sculpture and installation. She creates geometric systems or spatial grids, but by folding, layering or crumpling fabrics she also raises sculptural issues.[44]

The *Flache Arbeiten [Flat Works]* of Adrian Schiess (born in Zurich in 1959), which were so well received when he showed them in the Church of San Staë at the 1990 Venice Biennale, appear at first sight to fulfil all the requirements of Modernist art. These panels painted with monochrome, commercial gloss colours can be exhibited almost anywhere and in almost any way, except as pictures on a wall. In galleries and museums Adrian Schiess shows these panels laid out on squared timbers, generally in groups as floor pieces. In more confined spaces they can also be leant against a wall or partly stacked and

41 Terry R. Myers has recently shown the importance of the work of the American artist Mary Heilmann to Polly Apfelbaum and Jessica Stockholder, in *Mary Heilmann: Save the Last Dance for Me*, London 2007, p. 81. Communication from Polly Apfelbaum to the author on this subject on 27 October 2008: '. . . there is an idea that all of the patterns and formations of social life, in all its complexity, are a source of formal material – that is to say, everyday life is continually producing patterns of order and chaos in all kinds of interesting and unpredictable mixtures, and that my work does that too, in its own way, reinterpreting fragments of everyday reality in new patterns, which in turn let us see the social in new ways. So the formal is social to the extent that it always has this oblique relationship to other realities, and not just to art's internal histories. . . . In other words, it suggests that people always see more in formal work than just the formal relationships, and by giving people credit for that intelligence, you can play with the complexity of the abstract and the real. Even though the work is primarily formal people always bring their own interpretations to it. Both Mary, Jessica and I all play with this in the titles.'

42 As cited in *A Kind of Bliss: Polly Apfelbaum, Katy Dove, Len Lye, Lily van der Stokker*, exh. cat. The Drawing Room, London 2004, unpaginated.

43 Other, older examples of 'fallen paintings' would be Lynda Benglis's floor works and Anya Gallaccio's work *red on green* (1992), with its reference to Mark Rothko.

44 Laura Lisbon, 'Polly Apfelbaum', in Armstrong et al. (eds.) (as note 33), pp. 59–63.

partly presented standing one in front of the other. In the 1980s he initially used sheets of chipboard, but then moved on to aluminium alloy panels in various sizes and thicknesses, that he then, as always, had professionally sprayed with industrial paints of his own choosing. The gleaming surfaces show how the light falls into the space, and that the appearance and tonal values of the colour are dependent on the quality of the light. Thus the viewer is able to register the transitory nature of colour, space and light. For Schiess, painting is about working with surfaces, but crucial importance then attaches to the interaction of these surfaces with the surroundings and with the viewers. Some years ago, he demonstrated this in a particularly memorable manner when he showed a group of soft PVC panels inside a small wooden cabin in a spectacular, relatively inaccessible mountain region in Switzerland. For this work Schiess used planks he found in the cabin and broken branches from a nearby wood to install the panels in the space. The soft panels draped like skin across the piled up branches and created shapes of a kind never seen in his work before, that generated astonishing colour-spaces and reflections. In this exhibition Adrian Schiess focused on a topic that has always preoccupied painters: light. But, in contrast to traditional landscape paintings, everything in this hinged on realtime. The colours that defined the picture of the situation existed only in the moment of their contemplation by the viewer. In this special place up above Lake Walen, the artist's attention turned to the forces of Nature, to the wind and the weather, the masses of green, the natural light that filtered through the rough wooden structure of the cabin and of course the lake that – like the red aluminium panel on show in the cabin – looked exactly like a light-reflecting plane set into the landscape. For Schiess the process of painting is a never-ending continuum. And as he himself said during the exhibition set-up, the gleaming, reflective surface of the lake looked to him like a still-wet painting that he could go on working on whenever he liked.

The *Flache Arbeiten*, for which Adrian Schiess is best known on the international stage, were preceded by various other groups of works. In 1980, at the age of twenty-one, he planted fruits in his father's vegetable garden, painted and photographed a flower and his own face, painted in the snow, painted with water on an asphalt road and stretched a painting on plastic sheeting between two trees. These experiments were documented in twelve photographs that the artist has retrospectively described as 'painting using the means of photography'.[45] At Helmhaus, a new version of one his early works is on show near a floor piece by Polly Apfelbaum. This work by Schiess was first seen in 1980 at an open exhibition in Zurich in the form of oranges and yellow apples decoratively arranged as a rectangle. The typical instability of this work's form, materials, colours, odours and meaning is also characteristic of work made in the late 1980s by the British artist Anya Gallaccio. In 1990 she showed *tense* in London, also a floor piece with oranges, albeit plus wallpaper with a pattern of oranges. Central to her work with organic materials such as cut flowers, fruits or chocolate is the way that these materials change of their own accord. In one work, for instance, flowers are pressed against a window or glazed door by means of a second piece of glass, in another flowers are placed between two thick, sheets of glass that can either be installed flat on the floor or vertically on a wall. The flowers wilt, dry out and decay. This interest in transience was a feature of much of British art in the 1990s.[46]

45 *Adrian Schiess: Flache Arbeiten 1987–1990. Mit einem Gespräch zwischen Roman Kurzmeyer und Adrian Schiess und einem Nachwort von Beat Wismer*, Aargauer Kunsthaus Aarau (= Schriften zur Aargauischen Kunstsammlung) 2007, p. 16.

46 See Roman Kurzmeyer, 'Jetzt: Anya Gallaccio', in *Erlebte Modelle/Model Experience*, Zurich and Vienna, New York 2000, pp. 125–27.

In 1980 the young Schiess also worked on three box-like objects made from a 'frame' of four pieces of wood joined together. These works are placed directly on the floor, without plinths, and are also on show at Helmhaus. These bottomless boxes connect variously with space; on one hand, they relate directly to the floor, on the other the painting on their exteriors reflects the play of light and shade in the studio when they were being made. Even before Schiess started painting chipboard panels, he was already painting on cardboard and wood. From the outset his intention was to add a third dimension to his paintings. In those days he used to paint wood (blocks, timber and beams) and above all large remnants of cardboard which he would then tear into pieces and show as fragments, usually in largish groups. His earliest works already reveal a strong interest in the question posed by Minimal Art, as to how painting ('colour') could become three-dimensional. To this day that is still a core issue in his work and the source of its affinity not only with that of Polly Apfelbaum but also, for instance, with that of the American artist Jessica Stockholder. As Stockholder has said, she has never stopped painting, it's just that she decided to include sculptural elements in her work.[47] Moreover, with regard to the fact that she is a painter making installations, she has expressly cited the importance to her of Allan Kaprow's defeat of the easel painting and of collage as a 'combinatory principle'.[48] In her hands monochrome colour planes are articulated as spaces, multi-dimensionally spanned, multiplied or condensed into objects. However, unlike Schiess, the wall still remains her main point of reference.

Besides producing his panel paintings, by 1989 Schiess was already exploring digital art. Having initially made work to be shown on monitors, these 'colour-runs' are also now seen in his exhibitions as projections. In addition to this, his work includes abstract paintings on canvas, watercolours, figurative drawings and photographs of surfaces of all kinds. Some years ago he also started to make assemblages which would seem to confirm the affinity between his work and that of Jessica Stockholder. These works are multi-layered, voluminous, extremely dense images into which he also works painted paper, leftover paint and other studio detritus, such as crushed paint tins. Since 1986 he has also been taking Polaroids and photographs – of encrusted paint on the studio floor or of the surfaces of paintings, for instance – which he then has printed on panels or canvases. However, all these very different manifestations of his work have one thing in common: fragmentation. Schiess never sets out to create a self-contained, meaningful image; on the contrary, his work is about scattering meaning and allowing the viewer to experience a different mode of open, liberated, free-floating seeing that is not pinned down by the picture.

The characteristic features of analytical painting (which specifically investigates colour, picture supports and the application of paint) are also hallmarks of the painting of Katharina Grosse. Born in Freiburg im Breisgau in 1961 and now resident in Berlin, in fact Grosse concentrates on the findings of analytical painting rather than its methods. Her paintings reveal her capacity for rapid work, responding both to the given situation and her own inner drive. Her early works thrived on the contradiction between the formal pictorial set up and her blatantly free treatment of it. Crucial to this were the movements of the brushstrokes she made using broad paintbrushes and brooms. In keeping with one of Grosse's main aims in these works, her paintings reveal the energy that has been poured into them. In Kunsthalle Bern in 1998, without making any preparatory drawings, she sprayed green acrylic paint directly

47 Stockholder in an interview with Eva Schmidt in *Jessica Stockholder*, exh. cat. Westfälischer Kunstverein Münster and Kunsthalle Zürich, 1992, p. 41.

48 Friedrich Meschede, 'Bilder nach einer Reise', in *Jessica Stockholder* (as note 48), p. 37.

onto the walls and ceiling of one corner of the exhibition space. This was the first of the very many, temporary spray works that she has realized the world over in galleries, museums and out of doors.[49] But using a spray gun to apply paint is a very different technique from painting with a brush, for spraying does not involve actually touching the canvas with any implement. The paint is vaporized at high pressure, lands on the canvas as myriad dots and builds up to form a layer of paint. By definition spray works have a high degree of structural imprecision.

For Grosse, simultaneously thinking and doing is a fundamental requirement of painting. This in itself explains why, for some years now, she has made ever less use of preparatory models and leaves the conceptual and compositional decision-making to the point when she is actually executing the work. In 2001, at the Artsonje Museum in Gyeongju, South Korea, she integrated the whole space into the work which she sprayed, walking about. Thus the painting, as a visual record of her movements in the space, created a new, illusionistic pictorial space. The dynamization of her working methods and her use of a range of different colours has led to spatial works that do not presume a single, fixed viewpoint. As Armin Zweite has said, 'her works are not for the gaze that recognizes but for the gaze that sees. And the gaze that sees witnesses the emergence of the seen and the seer, although this genesis in the moment of seeing, this becoming visible and making visible are still a matter of debate'.[50] One consequence of this is that the 'spectator belongs in the spectators' realm'.[51] Ever since Grosse has been introducing items into the exhibition space which she then includes in the artistic process, her spray works have increasingly come to resemble installations. *Infinite Logic Conference* (2004) at Kunsthalle Stockholm, for instance, also included, besides a number of paintings, a bed, books and clothes.[52] Meanwhile in *Double Floor Painting* (2004) in Odense[53] there was a second floor, a wall of books and three paintings. Whereas she used to spray additional items of the décor in advance, for instance the bookshelf for Galerie Conrads in Düsseldorf in 2003, more recently she has altered the point of departure for the pictorial process by first arranging the space and then working on it and its contents as a whole. In 2004 she was invited to create a spray work somewhere other than within the narrow confines of the exhibition space. For Katharina Grosse the obvious response was to bathe her own bedroom in an array of different colours: walls, bed, pillows and bed covers, discarded clothes, books and magazines – everything in the room was incorporated into the painting. We shall return to this shortly. In Houston she painted a floor piece that again included books and clothes, but now there were also newspapers and eggs. For her exhibition *Constructions à cru* (2005) at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris she ordered three different kinds of topsoil, in different colours and grades. Having mixed some of this with stones and a small amount of pieces of wood, she had it heaped up in front of one of the long walls like an extended hilly landscape[54] – a process that recalls the work of Robert Morris (and other examples of Minimal Art) from the 1960s that led to the 'earthworks' of that era.[55] Grosse then sprayed the wall, a large canvas, the earthwork, the floor and the stairs leading to the upper level, where

49 In the following I am drawing on various texts I have already published on Grosse, and in particular on the most recent of these, 'Reflexive', in *PARKETT 74*, Zurich 2005, pp. 140–43.

50 Armin Zweite, 'Laudatio auf Katharina Grosse', in *Katharina Grosse: Fred Thieler Preis für Malerei 2003*, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin 2003, p. 14.

51 Ibid.

52 *Katharina Grosse: Infinite Logic Conference*, exh. cat. Magasin 3, Stockholm Konsthall 2004.

53 *Katharina Grosse: Double Floor Painting*, exh. cat. Kunsthallen Brandts Klaedefabrik, Odense 2004.

54 *Katharina Grosse: Constructions à cru*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris 2005.

55 See Maurice Berger, *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s*, New York 1989, pp. 70f.

she also exhibited two of her paintings. She sprayed the paint across the wall, from the wall via the earthwork into the hall and back again from the hall floor, across the landscape and on to the wall, thereby creating an illusionistic colour-space in the real space. Grosse fully integrated the earthwork into the painting by spraying a homogenous coat of paint on the soil, that brought out the surface texture of the heap of soil and made it look, from a distance, like a colour body in its own right.

Unlike Stockholder, who paints and amalgamates a variety of materials and objects for her spatial installation, Grosse only treats the surfaces of the items in question. The physical integrity of the sprayed components is not affected by her intervention. This is also the fundamental difference between her work and Morris's anti-forms. *Untitled (Dirt)* (1968) by Robert Morris, shown in the *Earthworks* exhibition at the Dwan Gallery – along with work by Dennis Oppenheim, Michael Heizer, Walter De Maria and Robert Smithson – consisted of a heap of earth mixed with felt, fat, turf, bricks and various metals. The point of the work was neither its shape nor its visual appearance, but it was for sale at three US dollars per pound.[56] As though to reinforce the anti-illusionist, 'intermedial' nature of the work, that same year Morris realized another earthwork, albeit not in a gallery this time, but on the site of a former garbage tip in Michigan. By contrast, Grosse uses soil in her works as a painter, specifically. The exhibition *Another Man Who Has Dropped His Paintbrush* (2008) at the eighteenth-century Palazzina dei Giardini Estensi in Modena, perfectly exemplifies what Zweite had already aptly identified as Katharina Grosse's method in 2003, namely the 'syntheticizaton of different aesthetic issues'.[57] In Modena she not only transformed a sequence of spaces within the museum, as one would have expected, now she laid claim to the whole, symmetrical building looking out over a park. Since the Palazzina is a detached pavilion that was to be comprehensively renovated after the exhibition, Grosse was literally able to penetrate and open up the building with her painting. Besides integrating all the exhibition spaces into her anarchic work, she also incorporated all the other rooms too, from maintenance areas to the toilets, and then even continued the work outside, where she once again deposited a mound of earth. This was also painted, albeit only on the side that was visible from the pavilion. Through her intervention the museum, no longer merely a building and institution, was transformed into painting.

Maximization – rather than reduced means and fewer forms – is also characteristic of the paintings of Christine Streuli,[58] who was born in Bern in 1975. Her indirect method of painting leads to highly formalized pictures with a singularly distanced pictoriality. Streuli rarely uses brushes. Instead she prefers manual reproduction techniques such as blot prints and stencils. On occasion she may use commercially produced stencils and templates, but usually she makes these herself. In that case, the figure to be transferred to the canvas will be drawn on paper, card or wood, cut out and then used as a stencil to apply paint to the picture support. The making of templates involves a process of transformation whereby an existing figure, or copied figure, is simplified and formalized so that it is easy to reproduce. Any inaccuracies, errors and dislocations that arise in the process are of particular interest to Streuli not only because they form surprising, new visual elements, but also for the simple reason that they perfectly demonstrate that, despite the use of reproduction techniques, the results are still originals. It is as though the individual picture

56 *Robert Morris*, exh. cat. Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris 1995, pp. 232f.

57 Armin Zweite (as note 51), p. 14.

58 See Roman Kurzmeyer, 'Poetische Reflexion', in *Christine Streuli: bumblebeee*, Nürnberg 2006, unpaginated.

were a documentation of its own making, as in the work of Niele Toroni, who only ever works with paint brush imprints. In Streuli's case, too, each work points to the artistic praxis even as she herself reinforces the autonomy of the painted picture. Although she uses a variety of print techniques to develop her pictures, Streuli neither resorts to or cites screenprints or photographs to make a connection between her works and the world. Many of her works are built up from elemental artistic forms such as line, plane, point and grid, signs and ornamentation. For Streuli – as for Christopher Wool from the previous generation – making pictures is about reproducing images. And in so doing she uses techniques, processes, images and languages from popular culture to explore the relationship between representation and abstraction.[59] For Streuli painting is work, involving surfaces and layers and actions that engage her whole body. Whereas Wool – as Matthias Herrmann has shown – also thinks about what pictures cannot do, and visibly makes room for 'doubting, failing, stuttering, cancelling'[60] – it seems that with every new work Streuli wants to discover how many different things can be combined in one painting.

At Helmhaus Streuli is showing a new painting and an objet trouvé from a trip to Syria. The affinity she feels as an artist with that region derives from the omnipresence in Arab cultures of abstract ornamentation in everyday life. Streuli is not alone amongst Modernist painters in this respect, as the art historian Markus Brüderlin recently demonstrated in his discussion of abstraction as an advanced form of ornament.[61] In Damascus Streuli found a ceiling light made from finely tooled brass, hand stamped, with twelve narrow, glass lampholders arranged in a circle. On closer examination it turned out that this Oriental rarity was in fact made from old and new components from a number of different lamps. In all likelihood it was imitation of the kind of luminaire that might be found in the palaces of Damascus. But it is also an assemblage, and both the techniques involved and its contents were of interest to Streuli in connection with her painting, which is very much about collaging and combining otherwise alien elements to create a new identity. This objet trouvé is shown in the exhibition alongside the floor piece painted in situ.

In 2007 an installation of new works by Christine Streuli was shown in the Swiss Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. The catalogue covering all the works in the Swiss Pavilion also includes reproductions of some the photographs Streuli has taken on her travels. As I said in that catalogue, these photographs are not a record of pictorial ideas to be used in her paintings, rather they document the themes and components of her paintings that she finds in real life.[62] In the world outside her studio she finds phenomena, situations and processes that she has already encountered inside the studio, and she depicts these in her travel photographs. Since aesthetic images are 'context open', Streuli finds them more resilient and better suited to painting than documentary pictures.[63] Typically, these photographs capture picturesque acts without artistic intent and situations and images that are reminiscent of art. But what has this all to do with painting? What is it that appeals to Streuli in ornaments, patterns, copies? Would it be wrong to assume that here, too, she is on the lookout for the surprise of an unexpected image, and that, accordingly, there are many

59 Cf. *Christopher Wool*, exh. cat. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles 1998, pp. 255f.

60 Matthias Herrmann, as cited in *Christopher Wool*, exh. cat. Secession Wien, 2001, unpaginated.

61 Markus Brüderlin, 'Philip Taaffe und die Abstraktion als Fortsetzung der Ornamentgeschichte', in *Philip Taaffe: Das Leben der Formen. Werke 1980–2008*, exh. cat. Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Ostfildern 2008, pp. 185–91.

62 Roman Kurzmeyer, Fanni Fetzer and Susann Wintsch, 'A Surplus of Form – On Some of Christine Streuli's Photographic Vignettes', in Daniel Kurjakovic (ed.), *Album – On and Around Urs Fischer, Yves Netzhammer, Ugo Rondinone, and Christine Streuli*, Zurich 2007, pp. 268–90.

63 Juliane Rebentisch, 'Das dokumentarische und das ästhetische Bild', in Andreas Fanizadeh, Eva-Christina Meier (eds.), *Chile International. Kunst/Existenz/Multitude*, Berlin 2005, pp. 45–58.

aimless steps in her work and that the concentration of her painted surfaces is the result of an unpredictable albeit clearly structured process whose development within the picture – as it seems to me – cannot afterwards be fully comprehended? In the dialogue between artist and incipient picture (in a dialogue that may be impossible to end), the focus is on the duration and presence of the painted picture as painting, which come to light in the work's contemplation because the painting does not in the first instance have to allude to any reality beyond itself but rather constitutes a world of colour forms and energies that unfolds before the viewer's eyes.

As in the case of Streuli's painting *ENSEMBLE ENSEMBLE* made for Kunstraum Kreuzlingen in 2005, the floor piece conceived for the Helmhaus exhibition is to be a site-specific work and matrix for autonomous painting in one.[64] In Kreuzlingen she used the exhibition space as a studio. She covered the floor with a large sheet of paper onto which she stamped a simple, regular two-tone pattern in strong colours. In so doing, she marked out a space within a space, for she then transferred the still wet floor pattern to canvases positioned opposite each other along the room's diagonal axes. Following this, these pictures were worked on individually and brought into contact with each other. In two places in the room, Streuli also subjected the walls to artistic treatment by spraying horizontal lines onto them. Lying in the room was a printing block, that had left its mark in various places. One thing led to the next, as though a picture had been revealed to the viewer only to close up again in other places. Coloured light set accents in the space, taking the weight off the floor from which the work had emerged and that it still related to. Thus visitors to the exhibition were faced with trying to understand the interplay of analysis and synthesis and in the process to recognize that in this exhibition of what might appear to be a multi-part work, in fact presence and representation formed a single, indivisible entity.

VI

What might be the viewer's experience of the works in this exhibition at Helmhaus, and to what extent could they be called painting? In which respects do these works reflect the characteristics of other media? Where are the trans-medium moments in this presentation? For the works on show the artists have used two-dimensional picture supports and painterly processes in space. Crucial to the appearance of the works and to the aesthetic experiences they may instigate is the way that the flat picture support is used. Planes contain space and time. Planes can hang, lie or stand, in all sorts of ways. You can define a plane by adding a frame or create a sense of openness by means of a series of repeated planes. You can fold a plane, stack, crumple, rip it, or turn it into a geometric or chance form. Painting always has a plane as its starting point. This self-containment is part of its identity. However, there are no rules as to how it explores, exploits and deploys the potential of its planarity. As can be seen in the works on show, this self-examination of painting also raises the question as to its points of contact with other mediums and how these may be demonstrated.

In her review and critique of Modernism, Rosalind Krauss recalls the line taken by Greenberg and Judd with a reminder that of the Modernist conception of painting which saw 'surface and support in an indivisible unity . . .

64 Streuli's presentation in the Swiss Pavilion at the 2007 Venice Biennale was also work and exhibition in one. However, the works were not – as in Kreuzlingen – all generated from an initial painting. See *Christine Streuli: Colour Distance*, exh. cat. Biennale di Venezia, Zürich 2007. As this publication is going to print, it is still not certain whether the works Streuli developed from her floor paintings in Zurich will also be presented at Helmhaus.

nothing was left but an object'.[65] In her analysis of the film *A Voyage on the North Sea* (1973–74) by the Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers she shows how he uses cinematic means to respond to the postulate of planarity and, in her view, triumphs over it. The film portrays a voyage at sea in which shots of a solitary yacht yield to images from a nineteenth-century painting of a fishing fleet at sea which show not only pictorial motifs, such as the fabric of a sail, but also the picture support, the actual canvas. In her lecture, Krauss talks of the 'experience of a passage between several surfaces'.[66] She makes the case, with Broodthaers, for a more structured understanding of different mediums wherein each 'must be understood as differential, as self-differing', where the real challenge is posed by their 'inner complexity', that is to say, their as yet unrealized expressive potential.[67]

When Katharine Grosse painted her own bedroom and all the personal items lying around in it – pyjamas, books, notepads – in the same way that she usually painted public, generally institutional spaces for a particular exhibition, and when she then photographed the scene and made it public through the photographic image, she was of course also posing the question as to the artistic medium: is there a difference if paint is sprayed on a bookshelf in a gallery or on one's own, unmade bed? When she was asked about this in an interview, she gave the painter's response, which is that the act of painting transposed personal items to a more general level.[68] But naturally the reality of the situation was harder to deal with than her response suggests. She put up a folding bed next to her own and spent the following nights sleeping in a bedroom that she had turned into a painting.

In an essay entitled 'Two Bedrooms in San Francisco', the American painter David Reed recalls a conversation about the paintings of John McLaughlin, which the other speaker described as 'bedroom paintings',[69] explaining that people bought them to hang in their living rooms, only to move them to the bedroom after a time, because they could live with them more intimately there. To which Reed's response was: 'My ambition in life is to be a bedroom painter.' The bedrooms he was thinking of were the bedrooms in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo,* where Scottie and Judy – in her other, fictive identity as Madeleine – made passionate love. In his essay he describes how he went to see the places where the movie was shot, and imagined the action. And he remembers an inexplicable mistake in the movie. On the headboard of the bed there is a night light that initially has no lampshade, But as Judy emerges from Madeleine and walks towards the camera, suddenly a shade appears. Reed decides that this inconsistency has to have been an intentional manipulation on the part of the director, designed to unmask the 'mechanics of his illusion'. In Reed's own work there are photomontages, in one of which – a film still from *Vertigo* – one of his own paintings is hanging above the bed. In addition to this, in a number of museums he has created an installation consisting of a bed, one of his paintings and a monitor showing an excerpt from the same movie. Reed understands the bedroom scenes in the movies as a pointer to the fact 'that in these intimate places we must reassess our fantasies and assumptions. All changes begin in the bedroom. The *Vertigo* bedrooms exist in our memories and imaginations. Inserted into them my paintings are still in a private intimate space. But these imaginary places are also the real public space which

65 Rosalind Krauss (as note 1), p. 53.

66 Ibid., p. 52.

67 Ibid., p. 53.

68 See the conversation with Ulrich Loock in *Katharina Grosse: Atoms Outside Eggs*, exh. cat. Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves, Porto 2007, p. 33.

69 David Reed, 'Two Bedrooms in San Francisco,' in Martin Hentschel (ed.), *David Reed*, exh. cat. Kölnischer Kunstverein et al., Ostfildern 1995, pp. 68–70.

we all share. Perhaps they are the only places we share?'[70] With reference to Roland Barthes, Arthur C. Danto views Reed's installation as an exhortation to the viewer to become a producer: 'To read as a producer . . . belongs to the bedroom. It is to open oneself up to the interpretative possibilities of the painting, and to make it one's own. To achieve paintings that aspire to enlist the viewer as a co-producer is what it means to be a bedroom painter.'[71]

When Katharina Grosse incorporates everyday items like a book, an egg, an item of clothing or even a bed into her works, this not only multiplies the references, it also considerably adds to the number of paint surfaces. Thus in an exhibition a bed is not somewhere to sleep, but rather a cloth-covered horizontal surface that can be painted, and that was bought for this purpose. David Reed fulfilled his wish to be a 'bedroom painter' with an installation that was also a dialectical image. By painting her own bedroom, Grosse was also seeking a dialectic that creates distance and makes space for reflection. If situation-specific art is in effect the opposite to a work that can be presented anywhere, since installations are work and exhibition in one, as Juliane Rebentisch has suggested, then precisely this work raises questions, with particular urgency, as to the nature of the private and social standing of the art that Grosse has been publicly developing for many years now.[72] The role played in her earlier works by the architecture is now fulfilled by the objects she introduces into the space, in the sense that in their painted state they are visually incorporated into the surface, as in a photograph, yet they still also continue to exist as objects in the space. The multi-perspectival nature of the work of Katharina Grosse arises from her integration of extraneous objects and of wall, floor and ceiling into her large-scale paintings. In the process the space is pictorially reconfigured to such an extent that her exhibitions take on the qualities of a non-place.

VII

In the words of Michel Foucault, heterotopias are 'places . . . outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality.'[73] As Johan Frederik Hartle has said, 'these are places of transition, which mark an appropriation of space, in which the spatially fixed nature of the space is reinterpreted by its practical use'.[74] As we know, according to Foucault, the demise of central perspective in the pictorial space through Manet's thematization of the picture surface and his 'insight into the contingent construction of spatial order' was the crucial step on the road to a new concept of the picture that is now largely concerned with the individual appropriation and construction of space.[75] This is one of the most important, but also one of the most controversial, constantly questioned achievements of Modernism.

Bruno Jakob has made a fantastic drawing of a proposed project for an open-air painting that describes precisely this situation. His work shows a painter, brush in hand, painting a circle of two hundred metres in diameter. The arc of the circle, painted in water, leads through a river, across meadows and past trees, it crosses roads, cuts through fire and smoke and is not even brought to a halt by houses. Bruno Jakob imagines 'painting circles'. The im-

70 Ibid., p. 69.

71 Arthur C. Danto, 'Between the Bed and the Brushstroke: Reading the Paintings of David Reed' (1995), in David Ryan (ed.) *Talking Painting: Dialogues with Twelve Contemporary Abstract Painters*, London 2002, p. 194.

72 Juliane Rebentisch, *Ästhetik der Installation*, Frankfurt am Main 2003, p. 265.

73 Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', transl. by Jay Miskowiec, http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html, first published as 'Des espaces autres' (1967) in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, no. 5, October 1984, pp. 46–49.

74 Johan Frederik Hartle, *Der Geöffnete Raum: Zur Politik der ästhetischen Form*, Munich 2006, p. 101.

75 Ibid., p. 105.

aginary scale of the drawing indicates a diameter of ten metres to infinity. With the arc of the circle constantly progressing at the same height, one could read it as a horizontal cut through the universe. What kind of a place is this? The remotely painted gallery space in Helmhaus still has its existing architecture and raises the question as to what else is there. Can invisible painting make an impact?

Niele Toroni works with imprints of his painting utensil, establishing no more than a latent connection between paint and ground. Since 1967 he has pursued the same, clear method that is not about creating a figure, is not about pictures, but is itself an illustration of work. There is no representation and the work does not develop. But there is the presence of the work, which in every new intervention by the artist makes visible, in situ, another configuration of these imprints distilled from an endless number of possibilities.

For Adrian Schiess, his encounter with the work of Niele Toroni was one of his most important, early sources of inspiration. Schiess's panels can also be shown in new arrangements, although every exhibition means the same thing to him. In his view painting is only possible if one thinks of it as a fragment of an unimaginable whole. This is particularly evident when he shows different types of work in the same space and, for instance, projects coloured images across easel paintings.[76] Every formulation is transient, and this transience, the chance nature of the picture, is evident to the viewer, for example in the way the light happens to strike the gleaming surfaces of his panels, the dense colours and paint scraps in the material pictures, or the marks on the studio floor that Schiess photographs and reproduces on canvas.

Volatility is also an element in one's experience of the work of Polly Apfelbaum. Her post-Minimalist works that are sculpture and painting in one, create places of transition, characterised by instability and latency. In Zurich she is working with sequined fabrics to which no additional dyes are applied. Hand-cut with scissors, the pieces of fabric are arranged on the white-painted floor so that the pictorial field leads into the space with works by Adrian Schiess.

By contrast, in recent years Katharina Grosse's spatial works have increasingly come to represent non-places, where particular importance is placed on the viewer's sense of spatial disorientation or constant re-orientation. In her case too, her spatial works are places of transition. Grosse explores new ways of associating or disassociating with place. There are dislocations and voids in the spatial works that relate to the inclusion and function of canvases in her spray works. Grosse creates voids in a space, on a wall or even on her canvases by repositioning the pictures during the painting process, already treating them as autonomous elements within the installation. When an exhibition is over, the canvases can be extracted from the installation and, without further ado, stand as easel paintings in their own right. However, in Grosse's spatial works the wall is not the primary point of reference for her works on canvas. On several occasions in recent years she has included canvases with earthworks. And, paradoxically, later on it is the unpainted, empty areas on the canvas that serve as a reminder of the installational, spatial circumstances of the painting's making.

On the white floor of the museum Christine Streuli paints a picture that she can use, during the process of painting, as a matrix for other works. The picture is part of the floor and may be walked on. Duane Zaloudek's furniture is a component in his painting. His aim is to create an ideal spatial context

76 Here I am also thinking of the work by Diana Thater and her telling exhibition title, 'The best animals are the flat animals – the best space is the deep space', see exh. cat. MAK-Center for Art and Architecture, Schindler House, Los Angeles, 1998.

where the transparent white planes of his watercolours can be absorbed by the viewer. And in a literal reading of the Modernist paradigm of planarity formulated in New York – the unity of surface and support – he presents an empty sheet of paper as a hat. A modest alteration to the form produces an everyday, all-American object, that for all the irony that may be intended here, nevertheless triggers countless images and stories.

A desire to explore and exploit the inner complexity of the medium of painting – seeking out points of contact with other mediums along the way – is common to all the artists discussed in this essay. As a field of activity it is both central to painting today and far from exhausted. At the same time, the medium of painting has to be considered in terms that relate to the wider system of which it is part. Since Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein and in particular since Minimal Art, it seems that the appropriation and construction of space by means of painting has established itself as one way of pursuing abstract painting.[77]

The act of exhibiting art has become a genuine component in artistic work. As far back as the 1970s, the American art critic and artist Brian O'Doherty wrote a series of articles for the journal *Artforum* in which he assessed the history of Modernism in light of the supposed neutrality of the white gallery or museum space. He connects the modern ideal of planarity with the gallery wall, which took on a wholly new meaning in the wake of Frank Stella's shaped canvases.[78] In O'Doherty's view, more than any individual painting, it is the picture of a white-painted, empty space that embodies the essence of twentieth-century art. 'The history of modernism is intimately framed by that space; or rather the history of modern art can be correlated with changes in that space and in the way we see it. We have now reached a point where we see not the art but the *space* first.'[79] And a particular feature of this space is the spectator whose 'contribution to what he observes or trips over is its authenticating signature'.[80] O'Doherty writes from the dual-perspective of the artist and exhibition-goer, and shows that the history of modern art largely coincides with that of its presentation. Forms of presentation have become a constituent component in the work. Above all, it seems now that installations, where the viewer is kept on the move, are ideally suited to conveying a sense of the contingency of spatial order and, on a more general level, allowing exhibition-goers to experience for themselves the processual, mutable, momentary, temporal nature of reality.

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77 See Thierry de Duve (as note 23), pp. 236f.

78 At this point one might also take into consideration works by Renée Levi that often seem to deal with the relationship between painting and wall.

79 Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, London 1976, p. 14.

80 Ibid., p. 41.