

Gottfried Boehm

“In the in-between. The painter Raimund Girke”, 1986

The first glance

Before a reader faced with a picture begins to analyse it, he is well advised to capture the breadth and suggestive import of the first glance.

However fleeting this initial moment, it nonetheless sows the seed for a lively encounter. In their turn, the following factual and historical arguments may clarify and strengthen this experience.

With Girke's pictures, the first glance, and for that matter the lasting memory, encompasses stillness and hazy yet brilliant light, emptiness fostered by a wealth of the tiniest contrasts and an impenetrability that calls for patience, where only waiting is appropriate. Although this experience cannot be surpassed by any interpretation, perhaps it can be reiterated in a more articulated manner?

The artistic concept and its origins

Raimund Girke's painting came into being at a time when the first generation of German post-war artists had already entered the stage. When he first showed his “white pictures” in about 1960, their debt to an engagement with art informel was apparent. So we should not be surprised to find Tachist works in that exhibition from an earlier date – starting in 1956. Looking back, however, it becomes clear that in the informel gestural idiom that Girke made his own, he identified formative elements such as the characteristic diagonal thrusts and a kind of matrix of horizontals. It was not long before the unstable pictorial surface of flecks was to be consolidated. The formless track of paint gained an anonymous formal value, becoming integrated into structural articulations, for which he found inspiration in quarries and exposed geological stratifications in the countryside. Yet it was not a matter of creating a composition in the image field, but of evolving a non-hierarchical network covering the whole surface. It is not the centre of the picture that animates the whole but the sum of juxtaposed parts of equivalent value. This novel, indeed revolutionary, way of building up a picture and establishing it as a unity was probably one of the most important achievements of post-war art, with many protagonists, manifesting itself not only in the all-over of American Expressionism but also, in a different way, in the egalitarian pictorial concept of European art informel. When Girke and other painters of his generation cast off the aesthetic of Tachism, with its existential pathos, they did not renounce every aspect of the new pictorial approach.

Something else survived: like several other artists who began to work in the sixties, Girke no longer put his faith in spontaneous painterly exertion as the power base of picture creation. In his early works we can observe textures that take up the expressive origins of the gestural moments and allow them to appear as a pacified, objective form that becomes the substance of patterns and schemata. Some of the titles of pictures from those years describe their makeup: Speedy Sequence (“Schneller Ablauf”) 1959, Very bright with accents (“Sehr hell mit Akzenten”) 1959, Structural field (“Strukturfeld”) 1960, Horizontal stratification (“Horizontal geschichtet”) and White Horizon 1963. Terms such as structure, accent, field or sequence point to a lattice-like woven texture, like writing, forming quasi-lines, in which the paint does not contribute to any specific shape but serves the repetition of similar or iden-

tical elements. Form becomes a free rule, significant for fine-tuning the colour sequence. We can identify a scheme of forms – an approach common to Modernism in general. Girke never took the further step of working to create serial pictures, for good artistic reasons, which will soon become apparent. Only once – and only because he had been set a specific task – did he create a true series (of ten pictures), the Progression BR (1970). He speaks appropriately of working fields within which related tasks emerge and are completed.

Connoisseurs of stylistic categories and historical movements may believe that Girke developed his artistic concept in just those years when the ideas of the Zero movement were being formulated. But in contrast to other Zero artists – like his Dusseldorf student colleagues Mack, Piene and later Uecker – Girke always remained faithful to painting. This point is worth noting. Any structural similarities between early Girke paintings and Heinz Mack's reliefs using light are not of substantial artistic import.

Girke should not be regarded as a hidden or hindered fellow traveller of Zero, for he did not adopt the programmatic replacement of the picture by an object, of painted light by natural light etc. (1). His practice remained devoted to the picture. The Zero artists, on the other hand, were impressed by the progressive arguments of Marcel Duchamp, aiming to define the artist as a strategist or victim of a fiction that arises first and foremost from failing to figure out the unrecognized material and intellectual premises of every picture. Duchamp recommended making these premises the medium and theme of the artwork. His attack on the picture as such was taken up by the most diverse factions in post-war art. It is manifested in the attempt to work, above and beyond the declared end of painting, with elementary values stripped of any suspicion of being fictional, as we know from Object– Action– or Conceptual Art, and also from forms of bastardization where pictures become things, sculptures become objects, and so on.

Girke's reduced white-grey pictorial worlds cannot be comprehended in terms of such destructive motives. Their frugality is evidence of a fundamental painting aspiring to begin at the beginning, adopting nothing without scrutiny, taking and testing every step ab ovo. From an art historical point of view, Girke can be seen in the tradition of the abstract picture and its founding principles, including recourse to primary elements, self-reflection concerning artistic means and artistic endeavour, along with the renunciation of any figurative references in favour of the self-explicative power of the picture. As forerunners and inspirational figures Girke sees himself especially indebted to Malevich, Mondrian, Ad Reinhardt and Marc Rothko, in spite of the obvious differences. The positioning of new painting in the sixties could vary, in exhibitions such as "Konzeptionelle Bilder", Munster 1969 (Conceptual pictures), "Geplante Malerei", Munster 1974 (Planned Painting) or "Fundamental Painting", Amsterdam 1975, in which Girke took part. The commitment to fundamental painting makes especially clear that these artists, as Edy de Wilde formulated the point, "were looking for a new foundation on which they could build up their painting." (2) Whether the often sketchy attempts at defining current trends were really characteristic, and whether Girke can properly be included here cannot be answered with certainty. However, it is worth trying to identify the framework within which he was seen and appraised. The most significant aspect of this framework was the conceptual moment. Rini Dippel claims this with disarming frankness, and referencing Theo van Doesburg's manifesto *Art Concret* (from 1930), "The artwork should be completely conceived and mentally formed before it is produced." (3)

A second consideration requires closer inspection. According to this viewpoint the simplest

elements that make up each picture (surfaces and paint, namely) mean nothing other than themselves.

This tautological self-reference dispenses with possible significant aspects of a picture, turning them back on themselves in a closed circle within which what one sees is what one sees. We meet such turnarounds in the practice of the precursors of American Minimalism, as for example, when Bruce Glaser gleaned the following statement from Stella in a famous interview in 1964, "What you see is what you see." (4) Once again Marcel Duchamp's challenge casts a long shadow: for an indissolubly indifferent state of significance for art.

As far as Girke is concerned, locating him here would be misleading. His painting is fundamental in a different manner. Here too the basic elements and thus also the material character of paint and canvas, brushwork and textural formation, are of decisive importance. But it would be too easy to conclude that each component in its own allocated place points exclusively to itself. Girke's pictures entice the viewer into a process of visual experience, which undoubtedly goes beyond the mere identification of the facts of the picture. The often-positing stillness of his painting is covertly loquacious, aiming to be accessed. Its ostensive complexity aims at eliciting a sensual experience, being more and other than a reflection of pictorial means "treading water". Girke's pictures capture reality in terms of its impact rather than as a definite definable quantity. This distinguishes his position from that of other painters of white pictures, such as Manzoni or Ryman. The latter is one of the four leading figures of fundamental painting, the others being Brice Marden, Robert Mangold and Agnes Martin. This is not the place to debate whether and, if so, how far, Ryman, Agnes Martin along with Marden and Mangold are exponents of the doctrine of indifference to meaning. Attempts to locate Girke in art history, as made through exhibitions and critiques, are not without pitfalls. The nub of his "white" painting is in no way empty autonomy or what communications theory has called "white noise", in the sense of mere surface noise, the optical stimulation of the channel or the medium, the empty carrier of a message that naturally fails to unfold. Girke opts as a painter for the White Picture. All analysis of the means serves the picture as a formulation of sensual experience.

The "white picture"

Success in revising preconceptions is probably best achieved by engaging with the structural elements of this kind of painting and its execution in individual works. Here a sharp and patient eye is necessary to clarify the colour in all its complexity. The predominant white has qualities that distinguish Girke's pictures from other "white" ones. White may be applied in traditional painting as one in a circle of other colours acting as an individual or complementary colour value placed adjacent to others or as a component in an arrangement of light and dark hues in the picture determining the pictorial world as a whole. For Girke, white is the crucial and the only component.

White exits the colour spectrum to take on the role of a preliminary quantity. One may call it preliminary because the artist (also in his early years) did not refrain from employing coloured white. It absorbs reddish, bluish, brownish and mostly greyish (from black) ingredients without losing any of its dominance and impact (relative to the colour values). White is raised to a medium that precedes all further pictorial differentiations – whether colouristic, geometric or gestural – yet remains present within them. In this sense it is fundamental or, to put it a better way, genetic, for it produces a whole series of effects that characterise the respective picture. In the sixties Girke chose geometric arrangements (form schemata) when

differentiating the colours. The most common composition was of horizontal strips, sometimes with superimposed squares or diagonals. The lines accentuate the sequence of colours, causing oscillations between concave and convex readings, lending a floating quality to the picture, which corresponds effortlessly with the crystalline gestalt of the pictorial grid. This intertwining of the constructive with the unstable diffusion of colour is one of the special features and achievements of this group of pictures. Their poetic impact depends on a paradoxical unification of optical clarity and intangibility. Girke finds a solution to this conundrum, which also fascinated Albers and Rothko, in his very own subtle, still and distinctive manner.

Insight is of the essence. The painter's white colour mode is not intended to be decorative, colouristic or aesthetic. Its disrupted, hazy appearance does not emerge haphazardly but is decisive for the whole picture. White is not one element among others but the basis of discerning differentiation within the image field. It creates contrasts and smooths them over, it reveals forms and allows them to dissipate, it soaks up traces of colour and makes them visible. The constitutive white mix is not only responsible for the perceptible degree of lightness in the picture; its aggregate state enables spatial sensations, geometric arrangements or gestural rhythms. While in a relatively unstructured state white is loaded with a high expressive potential. What we have called the loquacious stillness of the pictures, their multiple meanings, is connected to the ambiguity that Girke bestows on his mixed white. Being determinative for the picture as a whole, white undermines the logic of our empirical perceptions, namely the clear distinction between back and front, close and far off, closed and closing, form and field. In the misty medium, the subject of the picture and the background become as one. In Girke's painting we can never pit one against the other and maintain a stabilizing and visually effective distinction. Inversion, i.e. the alternating immersion of figurative moments in those of the ground, and in those of the figure, unravels the conventions of seeing. The optical process engenders instability, which we associate closely with the perception of floating, and with the impossibility of pinning down the painting. A corollary of this is the indeterminate nature of the visual space compared with the rationality of, let's say, linear perspective with its simple rules that allow a clear distinction to be made between elements that conceal and those that are concealed. Girke's white picture texture evades any attempt at probing this or similar structural arrangements.

In his early works, the geometric chassis creates the impression of a possible stabilization of this apparent fluctuation of the colours. But here again the picture construction is in the ban of a process and the power of its diffusion. The gesturally articulated pictures intensify this energy. They bring temporal moments into play which, combined with vehement movement, invite the viewer to enter a free, untrammelled state, sometimes almost a state of trance. The larger, more physical formats take this a step further. So now we can fully appreciate that the stillness in Girke's pictures is not merely a result of abstaining from form, articulation and a plethora of colour contrasts. If this were the case, walls just painted over completely with primer would totally fulfil the aesthetic ideal. Girke's pictures are actually highly articulated. But the picture process subsumes all distinctive, nameable elements under the visual conditions of ambiguity made manifest. This constitutes the stylistic means that make the pictures appear still and silent, inaccessible to language and its terminology, far from any recognizable reality and its semantics. Yet they open up to the eye, to a sensual experience encompassing qualities dependant on material and light, also bringing the physical disposition of the respective viewer into play.

A dense mixture is characteristic of the colour formulation in Girke's pictures. All parts accumulate in one space that is not pre-existent but becomes visible as a result. The white captures an in-between area that differs from picture to picture. We never encounter the same situation in the familial relationships of all the white pictures. This is equally true of earlier and later works, even if they display substantial differences. The geometrically organised works often build on transparent effects and glazes, which are later subverted. But from the first, the brightness of the image did not create an impression of endless transparency, as in the case of the true painters of light in the depths, such as Antonio Calderara. The light effects in Girke's pictures are much more about non-transparency, what we have called haziness. Nevertheless, this colour formulation is redolent of potentialities, subcutaneous layers, implicit colour values, suspected import. The white makes a dry tone enriched visibly by the blur. "Colour should not become pretty," Girke liked to say, it should be ruptured and sober, murky in its effect, harsh in tone. The old painterly motto – dirty your colour – takes on a new meaning here. To be precise, Girke's paintings are not truly white but mixed, i.e. grey – even the lightest have a portion of black, making them impenetrable to the eye. Colour components submit to the predominant pictorial grey, augmenting its profound, genetic role.

The idea of the "white" picture lives from the relativity of the colour, the fact that white belongs to the colour spectrum, does not form its own series or indeed any position outside the world defined by colour. Even a totally neutral white is, for example, warmer or colder, in relation to yellow or red, blue or black. It presents itself as affected by the cosmos of colours to which it belongs. Its peculiarity is not that it is not a colour, a non- or anti-colour. It is much more a matter of qualities of perception, the curious attitude of indifference that challenges the eye. In its purest form – beyond painting – white is best understood as transparent light, as a bright chasm, as absolute penetrability. Girke translates the theoretical or ideal components of this colour into something that is visible. Paradoxically, by dimming its value as light. In this way white becomes a ground or a medium on which everything that appears in the visual field depends.

Light and pictorial space

The viewer tries to contextualise the experience of density, haziness and floating. He cannot succeed for quite special reasons relating to the spatial lack of definition of the pictorial lightness. When, for example, Marc Rothko formulates diffusion as the dominant visual experience then this results from the power of mighty colourful energies that subtract from each other, or accumulate or compound their potency. Girke's white pictures are more reserved in this respect. Their reticence hails from the visible qualities of hazy light. In fact, the broken brightness does not occupy a clear space (in which the drama of self-dissipation in Rothko's sense could be fulfilled). Instead it creates an in-between space characterized not so much by emptiness as by the indefinable nature of its boundaries – unless these are taken to be equivalent to the edge of the picture. In his later years, Girke removed the dark basic portion of grey more markedly from its value as light, and even separated it off in the open edges of the picture. Individual layers and steps in the work process are hinted at, only to coalesce in an amalgam of colour and rhythm. In no way is the figure-ground contrast evident. What Girke's pictures are about is the idiosyncratic way light evades being something, not lighting anything, containing in no way anything graspable as a thing, and for just this reason achieves what no thing can: namely the opening up of an empty white in-between space. The

decisive point about light is this quality of in-between. We call a space full of light when it opens up to us, can be easily penetrated. Light enables that inconspicuous, unseen space that allows the eye to catch sight of the furthest object in the distance. It is all medium, an extreme case of emptiness, containing very little that could offer resistance to the eye. If intensive resistance does come into play, then it closes up the free field of vision. In this sense the eye does not see light, but light makes any vision possible at all. The less it is thematised itself and remains a totally transparent medium, the less its qualities are noticed. They become noticeable in the everyday mainly under negative circumstances, when the light disturbs us for being too bright or too dark – when trying to view an object properly, for example.

Girke's pictures pick up on this elementary aspect of light. It makes knowledge from the senses possible, it has a profound quality. At the same time the pictures lend visibility to an otherwise unnoticed, invisible (because transparent) medium. The dirty white opens and closes simultaneously, broadens and limits the in-between, steers the eye's breadth of vision and faculty of discrimination, depending on the degree to which the medium displays its own vivid realm, becoming the experiential space. Then it also loses its instrumental function. Light no longer opens up a space for things but a space in which to exercise its own strengths. Girke construes these in a closed, hazy, obscured situation. In this he differs from the visionaries, those who perceive endless depths, brilliance and transparency in the light. Light draws its own boundaries, defines an area – an impenetrable space. The viewer does not have a feeling of being carried forward in a fictive boundless vastness. Rather, he finds himself confronted with a finite concrete state that forces him to persevere, to wait. Girke's white always shimmers before the dark, and the latter's optical hindrance is always implicit. The more recent pictures in particular undo the quality of the light in front of the darkness, a theme and an experience that had always guided the painter. Here one can speak of a northern painter, who sees light in relation to its opposite, making its power effective and immediate in the mixed grey – that is really at the heart of his painting. One may also identify a basic human experience: the darkness of a shaded horizon in front of which the visible world comes to the fore as an inexplicable wonder. Light is determinate, not in itself infinite. It is created by darkness. The white of these pictures becomes a visible equivalent of life, finite life, through the process of dulling. This has nothing to do with the question of pessimism or optimism, but rather with systematic research into that reality to which the eye turns.

From here it is possible to appreciate further qualities of this painting mode. The floating white does not define itself as a surface colour or as a quality of the material, quite unlike the positions of Manzoni and Ryman. In all its materiality, by all reviewing of each step in the work process, Girke's white-grey (or grey-white) allows visible form to set itself off from materiality. Girke formulates his primary colour as a highly relative quantity, embodying all possible modifications, the most varied degrees of light-dark and even colourful hues. The limit of the grey's power of absorption would be reached if an absorbed colour value were strong enough to override the chosen basic colour tone, if the white-grey transformed into a blue or a red picture. The predominant colour would then also have to take on the role of the foundation. Such a possibility is worth mentioning because the conceptual opposite of Girke's work, namely the idea of a black picture, differs in this respect. At least when the black is conceived and formulated as a colour as in the classical case of Ad Reinhardt. (5) Black appears as the product of a subtractive colour mixing and thus not as a given factor that could be applied to a surface as a black, opaque pigment. Black is built up through

numerous work stages, involving the reciprocal subtraction of coloured components. Black is not a delimited quantity, nor an in-between, but a state that one could call absolute, for in principle it can always be intensified. All possible quanta of colour and all possible hues are swallowed up by the abyss of darkness. Black pictures of this kind thus describe an absolute and unfathomable situation in the visible world. Girke's grey pictures in contrast represent relative paradigms of a finite world. The metaphysical claims and pathos, the radical thought and dialectical mysticism of Reinhardt are countered in Girke's pictures by the sceptical surpassability of every finite experience. The in-between of the white pictures shifts without arriving at any fixed destination. This difference entails more remarkable peculiarities. While the black pictures become heavy, timeless and square, dispensing with possible differentiations of reality and conglomerating to a darkness that refuses to let light through to an increasing extent, his white-grey pictures, in contrast, are inconstant, floating, spreading out, temporally determined: rhythmically ordered and changeable. The gravitation of the visible processes differs in each case. Black unites colours through annulment leading to a movement towards the centre. It implodes to become a dense quantity, pulsing from this focal point. Grey on the other hand describes an unstable border area: it interconnects alien colour components by absorbing them and leaving them be, simultaneously. Its optical gravitation is more centrifugal. Change asserts itself, taking on the gestalt of a dense atmosphere, an articulated vastness, a rhythmic staccato, a hovering, a flying, a trance in no-man's-land. The black pictures describe a state of Being-with-oneself, while the white ones track a border, pointing inwards (into the stillness) and also outwards, offering a plethora of points of view, with much that can change on a circumscribed horizon.

Body script

Girke's artistic development demonstrates a sovereign unity in all its phases. After the geometric art informel beginnings, he went on to produce openly formulated and sometimes gestural pictures in the seventies, in which the procedures of the late fifties and early sixties reappeared but had been transformed. If one compares a large-scale work made recently – in particular, one with an arrangement of rows down the picture plane – with the script-like works from the earliest period, both hold back from spontaneous expressivity. The interplay between free pictorial rhythms and texture promotes different forms of experiences to those produced by linking colour energy and geometrical calculation. The polarity of a crystalline arrangement as opposed to diffusion of colour gives way to a picture concept whereby moments of subjective painterly activity flow into the graphic visible energy of the paint and the activity of its application. Gestures, visible brush marks and rhythms become the constitutive graphic elements. Girke clearly did not go back to art informel, however.

Key works, which demonstrate the transition from the use of a formal scheme as the guiding perspective to one devoted to the gestural, are pictures with the title *Grey Changing* 1973. The horizontal lines appear to be mere interventions in a more open-ended colour process, which can no longer be canalized by calculation. The free rhythm of the colour is not yet strong enough to define the predominant tone. The geometric arrangement still retains some of its old function. But soon after, the application of the paint will determine the movement and order in equal parts.

This new picture concept, since developed further by Girke, deserves our attention. The previous ordering of the colours together with the geometrical conditions are replaced by

a single act. The activity that places the paint also defines its structure within the picture. This interlocking of physically derived impulses and an objectified pictorial texture is reminiscent of script. We write, not by schematically reproducing the existing objective norms (that govern how letters should look and be interconnected) but by profiting from the scope they provide. The individual traits, ligatures and deviations lend expressivity and life to the abstract norm. A formed unity emerges, and as we write, the script becomes what we call handwriting. On reading this we not only encounter factual subject matter but also meet the person who is reporting and formulating. This analogy between Girke's painting and handwriting is not new. In 1964 Albert Schulze-Vellinghausen also spoke about how Girke wrote his pictures. Of course he does not use the alphabet. His elements are created as he writes, and their shape results from the forms of movement of the brush and the body's rhythms. An arrangement of lines meet as slightly sloping strokes, or short stretches of colour are repeated, starting ever anew. These elements often break ranks, causing interference patterns or open-ended arrangements.

The large formats are also of significance for this method, making it possible to sense and see the body (of the artist) at work. Their height reflects the human stature, their breadth is as wide as arms outstretched. The optical product ensues not only from the dynamic of the paints but also their notation. The body writes itself into the picture while painting. This inscription does not describe the body's own shape or anatomy but communicates the energy it emits. The rhythm of the artist's movements, his concentration or distractibility, the tension with which he is actively filled, becomes pictorially potent. The body's life is translated into the lively whole of the picture. What was mere momentary personal expression becomes a constantly visible rhythm, a graphic fabric. The body's ability to structure its vitality are objectified as painting, becoming restless and able to be assessed. With reference to earlier drawings Girke described this process of translation as follows:

“Drawing, sketch,
quickly noting down a thought;
fleeting and light, only a hint;
the hand dashes across the paper, rhythmically moving,
documenting this very movement, stops, perseveres,
accentuates or leaves out, interrupts,
starts again vehemently anew, hurries on;
idea and execution are one;
emotional excitement is immediately captured, in writing, in drawing” (6)

Girke's artistic practice can thus be characterised using the term “body script”, the point being that it describes an indivisible unity of something subjective and something constructed. The expression “gestural picture” also refers to this state of affairs. For the gestures are themselves ambiguous. They testify to someone and reveal something at the same time. In the case of a successful gesture, one will not be played off against the other.

When we speak of the grey in Girke's pictures as being a mix that repeats the structure of the living (to which balance, exchange and mixing are elemental) then these new pictures expand on this situation. Above all, they give it a (human) body, with a physiognomy, involving increasingly affective moments. The rhythm may be merry, buoyant, solemn, diffuse, disturbed, interfering, and so on. In his works on paper Girke even introduced aspects of a body

to the pictures (above and beyond writing the body into the picture). The handmade paper itself is a flat body, its open edges lend to it individuality and tactile malleability. The paint does not only cover the surface, it soaks into it, is sucked in. The painter's materials merge deeper together in the picture. We can understand this process quickly from the Latin verb *concrecere* (grow together), which is highly applicable and contains our term concrete. Body script and concretion help to explain each other.

On closer inspection one cannot miss the more open temporal form that Girke sought again as of *Grey Changing* and that brought a wealth of factors to play that had previously been minimized. This includes the graduated tempering of the colours from cool, fairly warm, to warm hues. These differentiate the affective side of the pictures even further.

Moments of great density and looser, almost shredded passages breed polarities and coherences, setting the exchange between virtual pictorial spaces and material surface in motion. The eye discerns a difference between the diffuse, integrating, formless moments and those approximating to natural forms. The complexity of this visual idiom is not exhaustive. It only suffices to give the viewer a hint.

Seeing the stillness

The longer the eye of the viewer wanders around the pictures, the more orientations, pathways, and contexts come to the fore. So the first glance was only the beginning. If we return there with the benefit of our analysis, then the initial question still remains unresolved. What are we tarrying in front of when gazing at these pictures that keep their secret to themselves? Girke's painting creates a model of experience. They are not about this or that, which could be recounted or encapsulated in explanatory terms, i.e. translated into language. They deal instead in elementary matters which have been discussed above: the light that is the precondition of seeing, the body as a medium of painting, the relativity and vivacity of dulled white, in which we, the living, can find ourselves interpreted, and so on. This in no way mitigates the astonishing ambiguity that we encounter here when we look at these pictures. We learn to handle it, come to understand their silence as communication even if it cannot be translated and does not reveal its rules. The hermetic closure of this painting is anything but idle secretiveness. It can be ascertained by the senses. This is where they gain their significance: in their mute accord with the viewer. The interpreter should not try to command this discrete and delicate dialogue and certainly not force it. If a dialogue fails to emerge in the face of this or that picture, it is best to return to it or move on to the next. The visible evidence is always the aim and the strength of this painting. Girke's pictures play their part e.g. in the dry clarity with which they display unnameable phenomena never seen before, that can be captured by experience. In former times, when there had already been much knowledge amassed about art, one used the figure of the muse to speak indirectly about this state of receiving a revelation and becoming enlightened, about knowledge and success. The muse of Girke's pictures is veiled, but she veils herself in these pictures.

Gottfried Boehm

Notes

1

Günther Uecker: "Meine Objekte sind eine räumliche Realität eine des Lichtes. Ich benutze

mechanische Mittel, um die subjektive Situation der Freiheit zu schaffen.”, in Zero 3, p. 220

2

Edy de Wilde, in: fundamental painting, exhib-cat. Amsterdam 1975, p. 1.

3

Rini Dippel, Some Aspects of Recent International Developments in Abstract Painting, loc. cit., p.12.

4

Frank Stella: “My painting is based on the fact that only what can be seen there is there. It really is an object. Any painting is an object and anyone who gets involved enough in this finally has to face up to the objectness of whatever it is that he’s doing. He is making a thing ... What you see is what you see”, in: Bruce Glaser, Questions to Stella and Judd (Interview), reprinted in: Minimal Art. A Critical Anthology, ed. By Gregory Battcock, New York 1968, p.158.

5

Reinhardt deliberated about this in his writings, also published in German. The exhibition and catalogue Schwarz ed. V.H. Weitemeier (Düsseldorf 1981) does not make this distinction. Artists in Germany who treat black as a colouristic phenomenon, as the basis of painting, include: Arnulf Rainer, Rainer Jochims, and to some extent also Gotthard Graubner.

6

Raimund Girke, in: Vom Zeichnen, catalogue Kunstverein Frankfurt/M. 1986, p.148.