

Some words about new paintings by Hadrien Loumaye

I met Hadrien Loumaye (b. 1999) for the first time in September 2022. He told me he wanted to make minimal paintings that, without being figurative or otherwise 'expressive', could still bear witness to his presence, could still be a trace of his personality, his attention, his existence.

Today we can see such paintings in his third or fourth solo exhibition. Unbelievable how much work he has done over the past year, steadily growing. He made murals, paintings on very large, medium and small canvases, drawings, sculptures and a book. And he made his dream come true. First by abstracting paintings of flower arrangements, then by trying out certain gestures on a large format. ('He dances,' says Victoria Parvanova.) Then by using these gestures on smaller canvases to create minimal monochrome-like paintings.

The new paintings are mock monochromes that are brought together in compositions of two or four paintings. Most couples form the letter P, sometimes upside down or mirrored.

By attaching two canvases of different sizes together (and sometimes showing them next to another couple), Loumaye enhances their appearance, their personality, a bit like the work *Untitled (Perfect Lovers)* (1987-1990) by Félix González-Torres: two clocks that touch each other and show almost the same time. A minimal tour de force with maximum evoked tenderness.

Looking at the four-part works you think of Mondriaan, without any attempt being made to refer to this painter or his work. We also encounter a new way of separating colour fields (by using separate canvases). However, as we get closer, we see that much more is happening than our initial findings suggest.

The apparently monochrome colour fields appear to consist of broad gestures with highly diluted, high-quality acrylic paint. The seemingly random overlaps of these transparent gestures (absorbed by the untreated canvas) create a varied pigmentation. Here and there we see thicker traces that emerge and evoke a pictorial

depth. Sometimes we find similar traces in the accompanying painting, so that a free relationship arises. The colours are related to the primary and secondary colours, but not without variation. Royal blue becomes sky blue, becomes mist, perhaps even a landscape. On a yellow canvas we recognize some traces of yellow ochre. Minor accidents. Traces of passages.

Loumaye talks about the works *Factum I and Factum II* (1957) by Robert Rauschenberg, two works that resemble each other, in which the artist has repeated certain 'gestures', causing them to lose their 'expressive' character and reveal themselves as a mere painterly act that creates a pictorial space.

We can also look at Loumaye's paintings in this way: fruits of a series of actions that have brought about each other. And this in a world of great tenderness, attention and precision, free from control and foolish purposefulness, breathing, free, light-hearted and yet spot on.

Hans Theys, Montagne de Miel, 1 December 2023