

colour as a core concern of painting

the night, the virtual absence of light, takes us back into the dark of the womb (into the womb's vegetative night that scarcely knows the eye's ability to experience) and, deeper still, into the non-existence of our five senses, into a state of being unborn and unconceived, into nirvana, into **NOTHINGNESS**, into the not being there of everything. the entire creation, all its shimmering phenomena, has sunk into nothingness.

the reversal of this perspective enables being to arise from nothingness, to give birth to natural forces, suns, solar systems, worlds. nuclear fission occurs within suns, heat, **LIGHT** develops.

life is evaluated, our senses develop and experience the world. the senses form: smell, taste, touch, hearing, and sight. **COLORS** impact the brain - purple, blood red, signal red, violet, tulip red, wine red, violet, and cyclamen radiate their lilac violet. from red to orange and yellow, roses exhale the color white, the color of light. lilies, too, are white, lilac and fruit blossoms as well.

colors are registered by the sensory organs of insects. the colors entice the insects into the sweetness of their life that brings about propagation or growth. the colors are the subtlest manifestation of everything existent. the colors occur when it is a matter of becoming and of life, a matter of the permanent resurrection of all that exists. i think of the glistening yellow, bright sun-yellow white, radiantly laughing face, encircled by a halo of light and color, of the risen savior on the isenheim altarpiece. this laughing christ presents himself in front of the night of the cosmos, strewn with innumerable suns. in awareness of the living cosmos occurring in infinite eternity, the face of god radiates blinding light, holy light.

color may be rendered abstract, to a large degree, by breaking down light into color tones.

the color tones red, yellow, orange, white, etc., can exist as such in our mind without them being bound to a material support. art enables people to play with colors, to compose a festival with colors upon a surface. these colors applied to a surface along the lines of form is what we call a picture.

i was initially required to take a different path. towards the end of the 19th century people learnt to liberate themselves from many false notions. thanks to nietzsche people began to affirm life as such, freud taught us that sexuality was natural and should not be repressed. psychoanalysis revealed that our sensual perception was richer by far than permitted to us by society and traditional notions of shame, by the strictures of religion and civilization. a taboo surrounded the "dirty," the "unclean," all sensual perception connected with eroticism, all intensities of smell, the experiences of the hunter, the slaughterer, the physician, all of whom were required to deal with bodily substances, excrement, internal organs, raw flesh, intestines, secretions, and especially with blood. any substances, anything slimy that might be associated with the body's sexual functions, all these existent zones of reality calling for fundamentally deep and intensive sensorial registration, were suppressed in myriad ways.

i contributed to the development of painting that dealt with all these repressed areas. the art, the painting, used the experiences of psychoanalysis. it was not the timbre that was important, what became important was the substance of the color, the fluid, the color paste. in the framework of my action painting, colors (substances), fluids were smeared, sprayed, splashed. ecstatic dionysian paintings resulted, the registration and perception possibilities retrieved from suppression through excessive experiencing were recorded seismographically, became graphic, made conscious through art. my action painting is an extremely gestural painting, to act out the physical is essential. the processual character of this painting is oriented toward the dramatic and theatrical. the happening in time is important, therein lies the beginnings of the actions of the o.m. theater. the practical execution of my o.m. theater did, in fact, develop from action painting. my action painting is the visual grammar of my action theater on a (pictorial) surface. the action leaves the (pictorial) surface, goes into three-dimensional space, real events are staged. action painting is a basic ritual of the o.m. theater. for 30 years i used the color red because it is the most intensive color and makes the color fluid being demonstrated extremely graphic, the analogy with blood was self-apparent.

for me action painting was, and continues to be, the renunciation (abreaction) of murder, slaughter, hunting, aggression, war (the spraying and wasting of blood), it is close to the masochistic self-sacrifice on the crucifix, it is the offering of the self in the direction of ecstatic rending of the god dionysus, total relinquishing, descent into mythical zones, into archetypical situations of extremity.

i reduced my painting to clearly suggestive monochrome unanimity. i gave to the color substance the only color possible for me, **RED**, the **COLOR OF BLOOD. BLOOD** was used for the “theatrical action” developing from my painting. my theater is a visual theater. painting becomes the staging of real events, color becomes blood and flesh. a fundamental leitmotif of my action-theater is the disemboweling of a skinned sheep that has been crucified upside down. i view this procedure as an extension of painting. using both hands the actor (painter) rummages elbow deep in the blood-moist intestines. blood and hot water splash onto the white cloth. for me, the guts and intestines that i squeeze and knead are paste-like colors to be applied to the picture. blood sprays like red paint, action painting has become a real procedure executed ecstatically, and expands into the celebration of existence of the o.m. theater. even in the mid-1960s i used extremely brilliant colors in my actions that were sprayable but were also bound with substance. at the same time, i wished to integrate by means of projections pure (almost insubstantial) color into the o.m. theater, and intended to project all the colors of the spectrum into actions as well as onto a vast surface. the projection was to take place simultaneously with sounds, smells, taste values. i wrote the following short manifesto:

FLESH	(light) COLOR
flesh	color
anal, sadomasochistic confrontation with flesh (disembowelling and rending actions) amorphous elementary grasping the color is initially not subtracted as such, it merely heightens the sensorial elementary grasping	sublimating dissection of the color and light intensities of the flesh subtraction of the color intensities to color scale flesh = light rainbow LIGHT-BOW light-core color circle light-circle matthias grünewald

in the course of the play the excessive, sadomasochistic acting out is sublimated into the grasping of the color. my concern at that time was to juxtapose colorfulness linked to substance, e. g. the color red in the case of flesh and blood, with an abstract, almost immaterial colorfulness. the substantiality of color was supposed to be sublimated to the projected color intensity.

on the other hand, i had long been wanting to introduce color, i. e. all available color-tones, into my action painting. the dark, fractured red of my early pictures had already been replaced by a bright and brilliant colorful red in my later works. there, too, it was simply about the hue.

in 1989, i fulfilled my long time wish. for the ritual of action painting i employed all the available colors, including black.

the descent into sacrifice, into archetypical excess, into death, ought to be transfigured, ought to be sublimated. suffering, the extreme state, ought to be communicated more intensively, colorfully, through the color. the shock induced by the color red must be heightened further.

the conscious-making return from the lower realms is adorned by color, in the course of the play sadomasochistic excessive acting out is sublimated into grasping the color. the return from the zones of the deep subconscious, from the vegetative areas of sleep, of death, brings with it the brightness of the making conscious of the re-birth, of resurrection. the spectrum of color reveals itself. in addition to the celebration of color as substance, there is now, once again, the resulting harmonics that has spontaneously intervened in the developmental process and, above all, in the process of work.

color is a concern of widest awakesness, of most intensive being. only rarely does one dream in color.

COLOR IS BEING, MOVEMENT, LIGHT

development of force, nuclear fission of all innumerable **SUNS**

color is the most glorious surplus, exuberance of nature, most intimate and deep **BEING** and great **MOMENT** of permanent coming into being and renewal, permanent birth and **RESURRECTION**.

color is the opposite of the night of **NOTHINGNESS**. color is the glorious, radiant, laughing occurrence of being, all senses perceive through the tasting of the eye color, **BEING**.