

A work gains in significance by going further into the origin of it - why, how and when it was made - , but this is not essential. The main point is that you feel something when you look at it. That's what's important. Robert Ryman

The art of painting is a slow art; it's an art that unwraps advanced volatility and discloses moments of congealed visual concentration. A painting is a synthesis of a process that takes place beyond the limits of its bearer. The painter focuses on a visible centre of colour that comes alive with the help of light. Abstract painting is a way of plastic expression much like the manner in which a musician uses the rather limited range of musical notes endlessly. In good paintings the variations with paint on canvas show a perfectly matured result, carefully balanced between a genuine assimilation of the history of the medium and the independent factors dictated by sensation and mood. This combination turns a work of art into a unique and authentic object. The painting remains a tangible object; an object with speculative surplus value that becomes the expression of a personal outlook upon life.

Abstract art does not provide a narrative guide; it keeps the spectator in uncertainty; it allows an unknown and almost indescribable imagery to collide with the expectation of keeping everything in life under control. This is why abstract art is often a mirror of the enigma; it accords the spectator the unlimited freedom to take the full responsibility to decide for himself what something means. There is no imposed meaning or ditto interpretation in abstract art. Abstract art is the domain where freedom of image is in agreement with freedom of mind.

Joost Colpaert's work is based on a conscious introduction of the notion of time; he moves his time-boundaries in the work by using time as a basic component, which creates intriguing works. His work is indirectly related to the tradition of materialising a concept layer by layer. His concept of form consists of rings and loops positioned over and in each other in such a way that this chaotic tangle results in a harmonious unity. This cycle that I sense as a whirl is an alibi to paint in such a way that the relative proportions in the composition are the elaborated result of a complex study that produces a beautiful knot.

Joost Colpaert's works are tangles in which colour and the elements of light and shadow remind the spectator of the basics of painting all too clearly. In this way his work might unconsciously be tributary to the successive revolutions of 20th century art. Cubism, futurism and even the explorations of the 'einzeltanger' Georges Vantongerloo echo in this work. Art is a guile, a forging of reality; the rolling beauty of the meandering compositions in Joost Colpaert's painting is also a way to shake off reality. As an artist he knows how to steer the paint patiently. Unlike some Americans, such as Frank Stella and Sol LeWitt who controlled everything quite geometrically, Joost Colpaert builds up a suggestive movement by means of the paint that slings itself on the panel as an illusion. The compositions do not remain within the frame; this means that Joost Colpaert's works don't limit themselves to beautiful ideas and "finished" compositions within and in the basic plane. His compositions allude to a certain degree of infinity; the painting is a particular detail of a bigger, devised universe and the bearing (usually white) wall guarantees contact with reality.

The latest paintings are more and more subdued, deprived of the will to apply colour in a decorative play with shapes. The most recent paintings reveal the absorbency of an icon, paralleled by an almost imposed way of watching which literally and figuratively aims at depth. These paintings have evolved into a monochrome blending of background and gracefully meandering orbital patterns. In these works the hierarchical supremacy between foreground and background disappears and it becomes clear that these paintings focus on the object; this is emphasized by covering the paint with a layer of varnish.

Varnish is like a film between paint and reality; it's the perceptible separation between the internal discourse on art for art's sake on which the artist is fully concentrated, and the varnish-related reflection the spectator experiences as an active participant in the work of art. The roughness in the texture of the

paint becomes a sign of life; the artist doesn't level the paint to obtain a metaphysical, smooth plane but leaves that paint and its properties to chance, granted by time. Joost Colpaert's monochrome works vibrate with life and according to the artist they even show a hazy quality of picture which the artist associates with water, the source of all life. Fluidity runs through his pictorial production like a continuous thread and thus refers to nature in which nothing is restricted by dogmas on geometrical drawing.

Joost Colpaert's spherical art of painting is a remarkable and exceptional way of painting that nestles itself nervously on the spectator's retina. Painting remains a very precise, plastic way to absorb and visualize the world as an authentic and unique retrospection of that reality. The enthusiastic way in which Joost Colpaert allows his painting to evolve into a state of spherical realism testifies of a thoughtful dialogue with the heritage of painting, with the intention of relating his art to the artistic life his life is based on.

Luk Lambrecht
january 2001