

Stefanie Schulte

"Orange wasn't invited to the party"

At the beginning of his essay "Chromophobia", David Batchelor recalls a party he was invited at an art collector's big house where the white colour was not only the predominant colour but discriminatory to all other colours.

Fortunately, the party that gives the title to this exhibition is quite the opposite¹. Colour is a major aspect of Stefanie Schulte's painting. It is the reason and the foundation of her body of work. This statement may seem a platitude when we talk about painting; do you know any painter who doesn't admit constantly researching the possibilities of colour? Who doesn't acknowledge the burden of uncertainty in front of an unexpected outcome when experimenting with colour combinations? An uncertainty, many will agree, which gives meaning to their work.

What I mean when I say "foundation" is that without colour, Stefanie Schulte's work wouldn't exist. In this exhibition, colour takes first place in visual hierarchy. It is not contingent on a space between lines, a volume, nor even perspective. In this exhibition, colour is the subject and the process. Let me draw an analogy from the construction industry: in Stefanie's work, colour is the brick, the basic unit from which she builds and shapes. It is in the hidden structure and the public facade. Stefanie herself discusses her painting in construction terms -*blocks, puzzles, do and undo, stack*- and relates it to the sculpture work at the beginning of her career. Furthermore, the geometry that she accomplishes through gestural elements on the paintings act as the binding agent. One can discern the artist's laborious quest for harmony, layer after layer, in her soft gestures. The canvas isn't concealed under thick layers of painting, on the contrary, every brushstroke

¹ note for the lovers of orange colour: eventually, Stefanie invited orange to her other studio parties.

is like a caress that reveals the weave. A caress understood as a conscious act of touching daintily a surface so not to disturb it. The care that involves this way of touching the canvas reveals, actually, assertiveness and reinforces the meticulous attention she pays to achieve a particular geometric composition. In Stefanie's work, the caresses are the transparencies, the overlapped edges, the open brushstrokes. At the same time, these elements provide the dynamism that compensates for the static character of colour and give us a sense of the time devoted to work in the artist's studio.

This very idea of the time spent at the studio takes me back to David Batchelor's reflections on colour. He states "just as there are certain ways of thinking colour that can only occur in the studio, so there are encounters with colour ideas that can only happen in writing"² and I would add that any of the two tasks make sense without a public that show their feelings, affinities and phobias in front of any expression of colour. That's what parties are for.

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² Batchelor, D: *The Luminous and the Grey*, Reaktion Books, London, 2014.