

Bernard Piffaretti

Kontinuum

March 9 – April 18, 2019
Opening: March 8, 6–9 pm

Klemm's is pleased to present Bernard Piffaretti's third solo exhibition *Kontinuum* at the gallery.

Bernard Piffaretti's works and his artistic approach are among the central positions in the multifaceted field of painting and the constant discourse about the nature, limitations and options of the medium.

Since the late 1980s, Bernard Piffaretti's work has been determined by the idiosyncratic principle of duplication, the image double. In doing so, he consistently follows an established pattern: a vertically set, colored line divides the canvas in the middle in two parts and the 'image' painted on one side is realized a second time on the other. This happens with immense formal and compositional security – without technical aids, a la prima, swift, and confident.

In addition to this fundamental element of 'active re-appropriation of an already characteristic one' (J. Asthoff, 2017), Piffaretti relies on the productive tensions that come from the very act of "re-painting". It is these ever-visible slight variances, drippings, errors, and small, formal differences that actually pull together the two halves of the painting, filling their content with life and vivacity – they generate hence the contextual stage, which makes it possible to incorporate a diverse range of painterly 'contents' and to bring it on the canvas.

But the question of dissolving issues of content or composition is not the subject here. Already early on, Piffaretti expressed:

“ All my intentions to paint are banalized by the doubling. The idea of the painting is put into equilibrium and thus unfolds its full value.”

And

“It wouldn't have been of any use to have only one single style, I use all kinds of painterly imagery and this allows me to have breaches at the level of painterly expression. One painting is not better than another. They all speak of the same thing. The most important thing is actually the time of transition from side to the other side of a painting.”

(Bernard Piffaretti, 1991)

In the interplay of breaches and repetition, concept and free play, Piffaretti creates a permanent loop of "images within an image". It develops a ground where questions about original and copy, uniqueness and authorship can be productively negotiated.

The key is the openness inherent in Piffaretti's proposal without becoming arbitrary: each painting is consolidated by the duplication and repetition, and it is precisely the non-linearity and lack of hierarchy in the imagery between the works and over the years that enables the spectator to have a very own, and every time new and surprising reading of the painting.

This element of surprise is fundamentally conditioned by the striking aesthetic effect of all of Piffaretti's works. Regardless of their year of origin, the paintings appear similarly fresh, direct and 'self-evident'. They effortlessly exist individually, as pars-pro-toto for the intellectual and painterly draft of the artist, and simultaneously they fertilize and enrich one another in dialogue.

However, where Piffaretti had previously counteracted the reconstruction of a temporality in his works – through the deliberate undermining of a linear temporality in the aesthetic expression – he now sets against *Kontinuum*, the continuation, manifest in the temporal sequence of paintings on the wall. Piffaretti's *No Chronology* exhibition, shown at KLEMM'S in 2016, symbolized the impossibility of temporal evolution in the painter's oeuvre. In *Kontinuum*, twelve works created within one year are now shown in their chronological order.

Bernard Piffaretti thus focuses on another question in his oeuvre: the moment of 'before' and 'after' in the painting and in the artistic work as such. He creates a situation similar to the one in the studio and his own working practice: the paintings are mounted next to each other without the usual dynamics created by special points of view, relationships and dialogue situations.

A more open and direct way of dealing with one's own work and its 'being exhibited' is difficult to imagine – or with the whimsical words of the artist:

....'le studio gagne sur la galerie'....

Bernard Piffaretti (born 1955 in Saint-Etienne, France) has studied at *École régionale des Beaux-Arts de Saint-Etienne*. He was represented in numerous national and international exhibitions. Most recently with a solo at *Marta Cervera Galeria, Madrid, Kate McGarry London, Andrea Rosen, New York and Cherry and Martin, Los Angeles, as well as Frank Elbaz, Paris*. In addition, his works were exhibited at *FRAC Franche-Comté, Besançon; at Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes; at FRAC Haute-Normandie, Sotteville-lès-Rouen; at Musée d'art moderne de Saint-Etienne as well as at MAMCO, Geneva or at Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin*. A solo exhibition at *Centre Pompidou, Paris* is in planning. There are several comprehensive publications and monographs about the work by Bernard Piffaretti. His work can be also found in numerous institutional collections.