

## Images of Floating

All barriers are there for the sake of being overcome  
(Novalis)

Sen's pictures of recent years possess an inner freedom, to which elements of order such as lines, squares and rectangles also belong. The contrast between forms and non-forms characterizes the tension found in both paintings and paper works. At first glance Sen's works appear to be a kind of continuation of the Constructivist or Suprematist works that we know from artists of the Russian avant-garde. This however is just a first visual building block for our eyes. These works have a completely different inner balance and do not herald the end of a century-old painting tradition that consciously renounced the figurative, but they open up another world, which generally speaking does without references outside the image. While artists like Kasimir Malewitsch strived to develop an entirely new imagery by erasing the century-old iconography, today artists like Sen can refer to more than a century's tradition of abstract and figurative art since 1913. It is not surprising that insights from these courses of time also find a place in contemporary art.

On cloudy backgrounds with an accentuated light base, coloured squares, circles or dots are connected to the centre of the picture with lines. The compositional framework thus created is the figure within the paintings, sometimes central, sometimes askew. This is characterized by a corporeal lightness which simultaneously suggests a fragile state. These forms are objects in the pictorial space that seem to be placeless. They appear free and likewise moveable. Looking at this self-reference existentially, this to and fro can be characterized as the tension between the world and "I" without reliable orientation.

In the paper works the state of floating is even more radicalized as the linear framework is occasionally, but often completely left out. Floating is by definition a condition of being unsecured and can be understood as a symbol for the precarious state of the world and "I". The compositional intervention of giving the homelessness of "I" in our world a pictorial structure of order is manifest in these pictures. These works are concerned with an aesthetic, which neither decomposes nor does it dissolve boundaries, but forms a new beauty. Beauty in this sense means producing an inner harmony with a potential for radiating outwards into space. Sen is clearly interested in integrating his Far Eastern tradition, which favours an aesthetic of beauty, into his Düsseldorf Paintings.

A philosophical reference to these pictures seemingly caught floating in limbo is found in German Romanticism, for example in Novalis. He is one of the leading exponents of early German Romanticism and in his Fichte Studies, amongst other things, we learn:

"It is the inclination of the 'I' to be free – the power to be free, is the productive imagination – harmony is the prerequisite for this activity – floating between

opposites. Being at one with oneself is thus an elemental requirement for the higher purpose: to be, but to be free. Being everything, being is absolutely nothing other than being free – hovering between extremes, which need to be united and need to be divided. From this point of light of floating all reality flows – all is contained in it – through it object and subject exist, not it through them. 'I-hood' or the productive power of imagination that defines floating produces the extremes between which floating takes place. This is an illusion, but only in the spheres of base thinking. Elsewhere it is something quite real; since the floating, its cause is the source, the matrix of all reality, reality itself."

(Novalis, Fichte-Studies, in: Collected Works, Herrliberg-Zürich 1945, Band. 2, Page 170).

Floating is reality itself – a realisation that characterizes the reality of the images in Sen's works. At the same time the state of floating creates a reference to the situation of 'I' and today's world. For the Romanticists, freedom on the one hand, but also the constant state of becoming on the other hand, were part of the continuous progression towards their understanding of the world. Sen's art is marked equally by a will for order as it is by the aspect of freedom. The effect pictures have is determined by this stimulating dialectic. Works of this kind cannot be produced without an inner liberal impetus. Their defined lightness is a constant. In addition, we witness a reduction of colours and forms, to a radical effect. Hence these works – paintings and paper works – relate to the essential. And a deep underlying light breathes through this essence. Spirit, play and poetry define the recent works of the Korean artist in the context of modern Western painting tradition.

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