

An die Freude

To Joy

Sen Chung is a painter and his paintings seem to hang in the balance and to be unfinished, yet on closer examination they fascinate. He urges us to immerse ourselves, to look closely and one can say to look with blurred vision, less analytically so more sensitively. At first glance his recent pictures appear abstract, faded or smudged, nebulous and sometimes nervous, and at the same time they are structured, geometric, analytical and clear. This contradiction lies in the adept combination of backgrounds generally painted in a very loose and edgy manner, a technique that has already dominated his paintings for several years.

What's new however is the delicate colour-field painting, applied in areas of sparse colour, fields and forms held by invisible forces, which juggle around on almost the same kind of backgrounds as free elements of grouped as ordered forms. It is as if, a Suprematism of the 1910s, freed from its hard contours, resolutely lends them their non-figurative and radical balance. Sen Chung uses this both strict and playful art movement, as now it allows him to think abstractly about totally non-figurative art, as the forms he employs are no longer an abstraction (essential character / simplifications) of visible objects. The constructive art movement, freed from all references to real objects, shows in geometric forms highest human epistemological principles. These are embedded in a nebulous field of vague suggestions of the real backgrounds (or causes) and are borne by the unknown, merely conjectured mists of cognition. In this respect the nonrepresentational freedom, strived for by Kasimir Malewitsch over a hundred years ago, is still today at the service of a formal-energetic economy that generates organised structures. The aesthetic programme should and can make a new reality visual, which although not possible to capture by conventional means, still exists. After the second World War in the liberal-democratic Western world the same phenomenon took place under a reversed sign, the ideological triumph of abstraction. The powerful demonstration of the freedom of abstract art in the USA, France or Germany after 1945 is not comprehensible without the political and social background of the post war period. And in both ideologies, it

holds that: Since the old forms and concepts determined the old worldview and with that the behaviour of people, the new art is equally able to do so, regenerating human society by creating a new worldview.

The freedom that shares company with Sen Chung, is the freedom of gestural abstraction and in this sense, both ideologies have been combined in a powerful manner in his current paintings for several years.

Following the painter's career, one comes across the Korean idiosyncrasies of two likewise incomparable art systems. As incomparable today as ever. In this political context, there is a historical figure, a 16<sup>th</sup> century artist, famous for her subtle depictions of nature, Shin Saimdang. In Korea, she is regarded as the ideal mother figure and is equally revered both in North and South Korea. She founded the *Chochungdo* painting style with its detailed, realistic representation of plants and insects – a comprehensive fascinating worldview. Sen's painting seems to me, personally and subjectively, true and full of respect towards these historical movements. He himself stresses the affinity and a personal connection to the famous painter Kyomjae Jeong Seon (1676–1759), his ideology, the comprehensive observation of nature and sublime contemplation of his painting. Sen feels very close to this painter and emphasizes his visionary power and independence, in particular the atmosphere in his painting, which has impressed him since his studies and the research of the worldview as worlds of images. Sen Chung, like the historical painters, investigates new ways of creating images and formulating a visual language, which in great dramatic arcs expands and knows its way about formal and cosmological equivalents. The paintings are analogue nature and model-like cosmology, Suprematist as well as abstract-Tachist worldviews, right through to more or less spiritually motivated seeming investigations of the reinvention of a nature, which from the outset no longer places us at the centre of a system, as Copernicus plausibly unsettled. But that again, is a whole new story.

Let us look in depth at Sen's paintings, in which we are aware of the forces that always remain hidden in the visible things in our world. Let us consider his nature as painting, which between the great ideologies formulates a visual cognition, in the cosmos (or unseen horizon) of which humankind feels unbridled joy at the

constellation of the objects of nature. If, in the end they are also just paint on canvas.  
“Joy, fair spark of the gods” it reads in letters from Friedrich Schiller; barely 300  
years after Copernicus...

Gregor Jansen