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[15. september 2009]

Interview



Daniel Lergon at Andersen_s

Interview: Daniel Lergon

Just before the opening of his second solo exhibition at Andersen_s Contemporary, the German artist **Daniel Lergon** met Kopenhagens **Anna Holm** and **Torben Zenth** for a talk about his new works and his interest in natural science and cosmology. Inspired by the Big Bang and the separation of light and matter Lergon explores the infrared part of the visible spectrum in the red, abstract paintings that in keeping with his earlier works are created with transparent lacquer on fabric. Thus he continues his simple, but original painterly studies of the interaction between light and surface, and his cosmos of abstract and free, however reasonable and precise shapes offer a highly aesthetic experience which also provides an intellectual challenge due to the scientific subtexts.

Daniel Lergon was born in Bonn in 1978 and has studied at the University of Arts in Berlin, where he currently lives and works. He graduated in February 2006 and was awarded the honor of a Meisterschüler, and since then he has had several exhibitions around Europe.

Interview: **Anna Holm & Torben Zenth**
Foto: **Matthias Kolb, Anders Sune Berg & Torben Zenth**

Daniel Lergon (DE)

3K

29. august - 22. september 2009

Andersen_s Contemporary

klubiensvej 22, pakhus 48, indgang 15, 2100 København Ø

web site: www.andersen-s.dk

Mandag-fredag 10-17



Daniel Lergon: 3K på Andersen_s Contemporary

What is this exhibition about, and what does the title 3K refer to?

Although I am going to cite some interesting terms used in astronomy and cosmology, as e.g. "3K", I want to hint at the fact that this exhibition concerns my momentary acting and thinking of painting. I always ask myself if there are colors, possibly quite different to those which I know from my daily life and work. I feel myself forced to get to the bottom of that question about color- and not each color allows every form.

As some of my earlier exhibitions this one is related to cosmological

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events. It has the subtext of the moment when radiation and matter separated, so this is a very basic point to start from. At that moment, about 400.000 years after the Big Bang matter in form of the first atoms were formed, and from then on you can speak of radiation, or let's say light on one hand and matter on the other. This is quite important for this exhibition, because at that moment you could, for the first time, see something, see colors, if you would have been there which is of course completely unthinkable. The reason I chose this subtext, this idea of the separation of light and matter, is related to what I have been doing in the last two or three years, where I have been stretching textile fabric on a structure and then painting it with transparent lacquer. The applied fabrics have different capacities, and using this simple gesture of applying transparent lacquer to textile I try to find out something about how light and loaded surface work to become color. At the same time I investigate how to paint without using paint, but with physical means trying to change the fabrics, making it darker with transparent lacquer or more luminous using reflective materials.

In this continuation of investigation of different sorts of fabrics I have used fluorescent fabrics for instance, which are sensitive to the ultraviolet part of the spectrum containing non-visible higher energetic, smaller wavelength radiation. Now, in this exhibition, I want to turn to the warm infrared side of the spectrum representing the low energetic part of light. The infrared is always connected to heat, and this idea of heat and red, and the idea of making a red exhibition is connected to that kind of radiation which is not visible, the so called cosmic background radiation, which in our days has been measured and still is a witness of the separation of matter and radiation after the Big Bang. Its temperature has been cooled down since that time due to the expansion of the universe and today has a measured value all over the universe of about 3 Kelvin - 3K - the title of this exhibition.



Daniel Lergon: 3K at Andersen_s Contemporary

So 3K is the temperature of deep space?

Exactly. But what has all this to do with my work? It is partly just giving a title. My first exhibition in Copenhagen was called "K" under a totally different aspect, so I thought it would be sort of funny to call this one 3K, but the more important thing is that it has something to do with heat, which is related to the red, and also referring back to the point where matter and radiation separated and the universe expanded. In this exhibition the series of 5 paintings is systematically getting larger defined by the width of the fabric. Now leaving the cosmological background and going on with more concrete stuff, my paintings in this exhibition in addition to the special question of infrared radiation try to deal with questions of materialization. On the wall opposite to that of the red paintings, large drawings are presented where the forms and gestures seem to come out of the fabric and materialize themselves directly on the wall surface. In making these materializations I didn't want to use normal paint or household paint, and therefore I used copper, not the very shiny copper paint you normally get, but real copper powder. It is very grainy in itself and has completely different criteria than the transparent lacquer on the paintings. I chose to use this metallic material because it has a relation to red, and it is also guided by the idea of copper as a matter that is conducting heat.

What is the inspiration behind the shapes or figures in your works?

Well, in the red paintings the dominating idea of the shapes is that of expansion. To return to the idea of the 3K radiation, at that point, 13 billion years ago, when radiation was set free, it was much hotter than it is now, and everything was much more dense and energetic. Since that time the whole thing, that extremely hot universe expanded up to our days and by this process cooled down to the current temperature of 3K as a result of the constant expansion. This idea of expansion inspired the paintings themselves. The thinking about this very energetic, hot, dense universe where atoms suddenly were there, and matter became matter, and light became light, is something that has had an influence on the finding of these forms. The shapes always come out of a spontaneous and not very constructed action, so the process of doing is also in the center of interest of itself. I never really know what I do when I start, but the interaction and dynamics between the fabric and the applied material always brings about something new and different. You could of course go further in trying to relate these paintings with the idea of expansion and the separation of light and matter and try to read that into the paintings by your own fantasy - for me it works and is important, but for someone

else, I'm not sure.



Daniel Lergon:
Untitled, 2009. 200 x 60 cm. Lacquer on fabric



Daniel Lergon:
Untitled, 2009. 200 x 130 cm. Lacquer on fabric



Daniel Lergon: *Untitled*, 2009. 200 x 200 cm. Lacquer on fabric

Are all your works based on this interest in natural science?

No. It is something that on one hand interests me personally, and on the other it is, as I have discovered, something that still has a certain importance for the general understanding of what color is, of how the drawing of a line depends on the motion and the speed of the pencil or the brush, or of how the shape of that line depends on the amount of paint material and its density on the surface and so on. You can say, what is important for me under the aspect of your question, are the basic questions and guidelines of painting concerning the interaction of light and surface, in the moment especially on fabric. You can of course easily find connections to optics and physics, but it is really not very complicated or difficult, it is rather school knowledge. Then, of course there are these subtexts of cosmology, astronomy and physics that I somehow find interesting at the moment, and that I think touches the very basics of our existence and therefore gives it a certain background. But it is not something that you have to know or feel in front of my work, it is more an inspiration for me.



: *Untitled*, 2009. 270 x 200 cm. Lacquer on fabric



: *Untitled*, 2009. 340 x 200 cm. Lacquer on fabric

Do you want people to experience a physical reaction in front of your paintings?

Yes, of course. Everything is a physical experience, but I don't wish to push that to the point beyond my interest. It is more that I make something, e.g. the brush leaving dynamic traces on the fabric, that can give the moving spectator the idea that they are part of the creation. Which is happening when you move in front of a painting, that is playing with light and with the induced picture sequences of fantasy related to yourself and to some part of the world. That is valid for both the painter and the spectator. In connection with my exhibition in Berlin there was a text about my works relating them to the term 'Eigenraum', which refers to the idea that when you enter the space in front of a painting, you are somehow taking part in the work by your moving and by your imagination. This point is very obvious when talking about my retroreflective works, but it is also such a general statement that you can basically apply to all works of art.



Daniel Lergon:
untitled, 2009. dimensions variable
Cobber on wall



Daniel Lergon: *untitled*, 2009. dimensions variable
Cobber on wall



Daniel Lergon:
untitled, 2009. dimensions variable
Cobber on wall

All the works of yours, that I have seen, have some kind of delicacy when it comes to the material, for instance your use of silk or lacquer; do the qualities of the material have a certain meaning to you?

Actually not, I rather see the materials, I choose, in the light of these very essential questions of the functions of color, surface properties and

some aspects of physical behaviour, so it is not so much the delicacy of the textile that I'm interested in. Well, it was to a certain point in the beginning when I was investigating what fabric is and how I can use it, but then I became more interested in the optical and physical categories which these fabrics represented, for instance what happens when I stretch out a transparent fabric or very dark, black velvet. And I became more obsessed with these questions of how light and surface interact without being painted, and what happens when I apply paint, how details of the painted form are influenced by the background light of the used fabric and especially how to paint without paint or pigment and which colors come out of this process. This was more important to me than the delicate aspects of the fabric. Fabrics always have their certain colors and structures and so on, and silk for instance has often been used by different artists before because of its clean, unpainted surface, but I am mostly interested in the optical and physical aspects they are able to transport, and this is my approach to it. It is not something that has to go on forever, so it is not so much the fabric in itself that is important, but more the use of it to make a painting. In other words it is just a clean and sober surface for the marks which I set on it. It is rather a springboard for my play with light and color.

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