

Blouin Modernpainters: Matthias Bitzer, Sequences from a volatile now at Almine Rech Gallery, by Anya Harrison, April 2018

BLOUIN modernpainters

ART / ARCHITECTURE / DESIGN / PERFORMANCE / FILM

APRIL 2018



Matthias Bitzer, "Time Traveller (sequence from a volatile now)," acrylic and ink on canvas, wood, metal, glass, paint, 210 x 540 x 50 cm, 82 5/8 x 212 5/8 x 19 5/8 inches

LONDON

'Matthias Bitzer: Sequences from a volatile now' at Almine Rech Gallery

Had Matthias Bitzer not become an artist, he might well have turned to philosophy, linguistics, or even physics. His carefully composed "multi-panels" — intricately layered reconstructions of reality that marry painting, drawing, collage, and sculpture — explore how time and space can be perceived, mapped and framed. For his upcoming solo exhibition, "Sequences From a Volatile Now," at the Almine Rech Gallery in London from April 17 to May 19, the Berlin-based artist presents new wall-based and freestanding pieces that delve deeper into this field.

Bitzer's art grows, first and foremost, out of his encounters with words. His current reading material, which he dug out of his bag during my recent visit to his Kreuzberg studio, was "Rhizome," the first section of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's celebrated 1980 philosophical work "A Thousand Plateaus." The tome's playful approach to the act of reading — the authors encourage readers to start from any page — and its rich analysis of subjects, including stratification and interconnectivity, offer a

useful lens through which to approach Bitzer's own work, which he describes as "a visual form of poetry."

His paintings frequently combine figurative elements — often portraits of historic and anonymous, androgynous figures — with abstract geometric patterns. In "Aura of doubt" (2018), the face and upper torso of a young woman are interlaid with circles and arcs reminiscent of a Sonia Delaunay canvas. The frame, painted in dizzying striations of black and white, becomes part of the work. As Bitzer explains, "Frames are usually used to distinguish between the actual work and the outside world, whereas I work to dissolve these borders."

When extended to the "multi-panels," this philosophy takes on a logic of its own. "Time Traveller" (2017), expands and extends beyond the canvas to a configuration of elements that jut out from the wall, either perpendicularly or with a hint of visual distortion — like momentary caesuras that instill a certain rhythm. Together, they make up a series of spatial planes, or portals, that

Matthias Bitzer's "Aura of doubt (sequence from a volatile now)," 2017, acrylic and ink on canvas, 244 x 214 cm (framed)



hint at the temporal distances Bitzer covers with his art. It's a poised interplay between the visual and the cerebral: what we see, what we think we know, and what we sense.

In a similar vein, Bitzer's sculptures — a series of geometric shapes made out of thin metal wires — look as if they're on the verge of toppling, cascading, slipping and sliding, their forms only just holding together. The artist's work takes on a particular clarity when seen in the context of an exhibition. While the individual pieces are developed in his studio, they are only truly brought together in an exhibition, where, without recourse to plans or models, they can be experienced within the unique spatial conditions of each venue. Together, they act as momentary pauses, an act of distillation in a whirl of chaos. They are "built up like a phrase," explained Bitzer. "Created out of different materials, they are brought together in a composed harmony, like a simulation of nature."

— ANYA HARRISON