

Chris Succo

Lives and works in Düsseldorf, Germany
Born in 1979, Germany.



“There is no ‘why’... I’ve just been making things for as long as I can remember,” begins Chris Succo on what drives him to create. “Working with my hands comes naturally to me, whether to paint, write or play guitar.” The Düsseldorf-born artist is modest where his work is concerned. He creates simply out of necessity and a precise curiosity for process and materiality. It’s a welcome reprieve from the obscure, verbose and often aloof artist statements that do little to make their oeuvre accessible.

There is an immediacy in Succo’s paintings that corresponds with his no-nonsense, studio-based approach. Exemplified perfectly in his decision to use white paint - a motif that has become a sort of trademark for his work - Succo says this was initially an aesthetics response to the venue for an upcoming exhibition. “I started using white simply because, after visiting the site for a show in Geneva, it became clear that a series of layered black and grey paintings I had planned for it wouldn’t work in the space,” he explains. “The logical solution was to do the opposite and this led to the conclusion that white works very well for me; it enhances the visibility of the details I’m interested in without embedding unwanted meanings or connotations.”

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Succo's tools and process are equally no-frills. His often monochromatic or two-tone paintings are primarily made by spray painting lacquer and oil on canvas, and some of his sculptures consist of steel, mesh and boxing equipment. "I like raw, simple materials," says Succo. "I make painting tools from cardboard and get everything else from a small shop called Dirk Weber, in Bonn." For his series that was nicknamed ZigZag Paintings (derived from their calligraphic aesthetic) Succo describes the process as straightforward; aside from the final layer which is applied in a motion that resembles silk-screening and is a little more complex and detailed, the rest of the image is composed only of a predrawing and a top-layer of oil paint.

Conceptually, the series was based on the idea of 'facsimile' and the individuality of handwriting, focusing on the "elements of expression and refinement of forms and technique". Succo's interest in poetry is thematically reflected here through the subject matter of penmanship. Having previously published a poetry book with his friend Paul Wasserman titled *The Price You Pay For Not Being Alone With Your Dying*, he began using lines from the book to give names to his paintings in a way that demonstrates his ability to work on both a conceptual and practical level: "Some works get a title to know which one is which, but for the most part the title does a good job in giving you an idea of what the painting wants."

Despite being able to create both abstractly and theoretically, Succo insists that his work is often a case of 'what you see is what you get'.

"The main obvious link running through my work is that it's all done by me," he explains. Though the deeper subtextual elements within his paintings are encoded by intuition and emotion in such a way the viewer can freely engage with them, he says "when you're focusing too much on the narrative, or trying to find the words for it, you lose control of the bigger picture... And that's exactly what they are – pictures."

