ALMINE RECH

Matthias Bitzer
you in the space; the space in you

Feb 25 — Mar 31, 2022 | Shanghai

Almine Rech Shanghai is pleased to announce *you in the Space; the space in you*, Matthias Bitzer's **sixth** solo exhibition with the gallery and his first exhibition in China.

The works in *you in the space; the space in you* evince a turn inwards—a subtle contemplation of how time, memory, and perception can be captured as a complex, relational space. Italian physicist Carlo Rovelli argues that there is nothing intrinsic about the flowing of time, describing its movements instead as "a blurred reflection of a mysterious improbability of the universe at a point in the past." The secret of time, Rovelli claims, "lies in this slippage that we feel on our pulse, viscerally, in the enigma of memory, in anxiety about the future." Drawing upon memory, the visual legacy of modernist abstraction, hermetic allusions to literature, and personal symbology, the recent works of German artist Matthias Bitzer echo Rovelli's assertion that "what we call time is a complex collection of structures, of layers."

The exhibition's title work depicts two abstracted line figures whose limbs delicately overlap atop a light blue ground. The dramatically reduced composition calls attention towards the myriad ways in which our worlds touch one another, yet nonetheless maintain an insistent insularity. In a suite of paintings entitled *les Parques*, a trio of elegant somewhat androgynous figures clothed in geometric garments recalling the abstract textiles of Sonia Delaunay impassively gaze at the viewer. Named after the three fates, these figures seem at once familiar and foreign, contemporary and historic, iconic and unknown. Rather than bring the viewer closer to them, the intimacy and directness of their gaze seems to emphasize the distance between the beholder and that which they are beholding: an intensely personal space between.

Bitzer is emphatic that the meanings of his works are not fixed, but instead emerge through the experience of their observers in time and space. His work possesses a kind of openness born of interstitial spaces: the gaps between abstraction and figuration, painting and sculpture, the historic and the contemporary—and between one moment, one impression, one sensation and another. Working in thin layers of acrylic paint, the immediate effect of Bitzer's canvases is flat, rigorous, and precise. Yet only a few moments with them reveals a world of submerged forms or extensions into space that seem to flicker upon the surface of the image.

In the painting *trésor* a spectral face looms behind a precise grid of colorful squares. Lurking behind these shapes, a hazy visage extends to the edges of the composition. Entangled in a visual tug of war with the geometric layer of the painting, the figure is never fully legible to us, but rather seems to inhabit the image—perhaps even to haunt it. The cropping of the figure (we only see the traces of a disembodied face) imparts a sense of immediacy, of closeness, that is confounded by the insistent duality of the image: the geometric surface that obscures her and holds her at a distance. The painting hinges open to reveal its recto by means of a mirror integrated into a custom frame. Here too, what we see is contingent and depends on many factors: the conditions of the room, the gravity of the object, and the movement of the exhibitions' visitors in space, which can push the "door" shut through the displacement of air.

Viewing therefore is never a stable experience in Bitzer's universe, but always something partial, something chimerical, something in a state of becoming.

— Jesi Khadivi, Berlin-based curator and writer