

On Nr. 9, 1999 by Icke Winzer

Icke Winzer painted *Nr. 9, 1999* as his contribution to the exhibition *Die Farbe (Rot) hat mich*. The picture is uncompromisingly red - as red as red can be. This uncompromising - indeed, unconditional - red of the painting is experienced as red created by painting. In Winzer's picture experiencing the unconditional red is offset by the experience of painting, and of an extremely radical painting, at that.

Although *Nr. 9, 1999* is uncompromisingly red, the painting contains other colors as well, involving virtually the entire color spectrum in the picture. These other colors definitely stand out against the red of the painting and are perceived from a distance as areas, patches and stripes of different sizes, appearing with far greater frequency in the upper left hand area of the painting, marked off by an imaginary diagonal from the lower third of the left hand edge of the painting to the upper right corner. It is therefore justified to speak of a division of the picture into two areas: an upper area that is turbulent both in artistic terms and as far as the often harsh color contrasts are concerned, and a lower area that is structured in a much more reserved way and characterized by a subtly differentiated red color continuum, within which there are relatively few 'disruptions'. Nevertheless, it is impossible to characterize this division of the areas of the painting and the forms in red and other colors located in both areas as elements of an order that can be detached, as it were, from the picture itself. The forms are quite evidently not based on a geometric pattern or a figurative design. They therefore elude any attempt to systemize them, largely because of their highly differentiated structure and their differing relations to the background of the painting. At one place they dissolve into the background, yet in another they develop out of the background. Here they are layered over the background, there they are layered over one another or tangled together. In one area they were mixed within the painting process, in another they are set off starkly against one another and can appear as a glaze or built up into haptic color structures. Whatever you believe from a distance to be a form or composition, turns out close up to be a multitude of purely artistic operations that, no matter how contradictory, indeed, how risky they at times appear, are nevertheless coordinated in one goal: to bringing out red and to its intensification into to a lively color value in an extraordinary presence.

Winzer's artistic strategy can be perceived, for instance, by regarding the picture in terms of European convention; that is, from upper left to lower right. After a small red 'prelude', black comes into view first. Consequently, the red of the picture is absorbed as a function of the black, in which the direction of the black spatula strokes does not follow the reading direction, but stops it, thus retarding the perception of the red area of the picture, which, as its goal, is always in view as well. Finally, the eye has overcome a difficult complementary contrast to red in the narrow violet area next to black as another barrier, before the eye can travel over darker red values to reach the zone of almost pure cadmium red tones that runs diagonally through the picture. Bringing out the red and intensifying it into an unconditional red is therefore due not least to the kind of production methods based on a knowledge of perceptive conventions that answers them here, as elsewhere it can let them slide. An example of this is the 'square patch' on the right below the

centre of the picture, which acts as the formal stop for the eye movement when discovering the red. However, it cannot undertake this function because it is structured from a kind of pink and dark red as color value. Charged by the movement described, it instead becomes a platform and a hinge for other constellations within the picture, such as a structure in the shape of a double hook sustained by a dark red, which develops out of the complex ductus position on the lower left of the picture via a strip-shaped patch below the centre of the picture and the 'square patch' in the upper centre. On the other hand, however, it is hard to decide here whether this constellation is determined by the color values or the bas-relief that distinguishes all the positions mentioned. At any rate, the relief structures in the picture form another independent structure that works with or against the other elements of the picture - color values, luminosity, contrasts, the way the paint is applied, to name only a few - thus making an important contribution to an extraordinarily complex differentiation of the visual presentation.

The contrast between so-called non-relational and relational art is resolved in *Nr. 9, 1999*. Just like non-relational works of art, it stands up as an object and just because it does not reveal any references outside the picture, it can only be perceived as an object in its totality. On the other hand, this painting is a work of relational art and should therefore be classified within the tradition of European painting, because it quite obviously is not just composed, but also deals with the subject of composition as a central theme. This is largely evident when observed from a distance. However, as a composed picture, Winzer's *Nr. 9, 1999* is extraordinarily unconventional. Its compositional structure does not evoke a stable organization within the picture but, quite the contrary, a dynamic constellation of directional values, which does not only defy any attempt at order, but also takes order as a quality of perception as a central theme, while at the same time questioning it. This is experienced above all when observing the picture up close or from a slight distance. It is possible to experience this special achievement by the change in distance from the picture that is caused by the painting itself.

In contrast to typical works of non-relational art, a hierarchical divide does not develop between Winzer's painting and the observer, nor is he restricted to one particular standpoint, as in works of relational art. The picture does not confront the observer like an object at a remove, but as a painting, as something made that deals with the conditions of its creation as a central theme. The characteristic element of Winzer's works is allowing painting to become a subject as a definite structure, to create, as it were, pictures of the structure of painting. This is the condition for allowing the observer to adopt an attitude to it that corresponds to that of the artist: there is no principal difference between the relationship that the artist has to his work in its production and the relationship that the observer has on viewing the picture. In Winzer's works, painting and seeing are treated as equivalent, although different, and related activities involved in creating a picture. You can recognize the *communicative element* in this equality of painting and observing that the artist postulates for his work, and at the same time his artistic operations can be considered as its development and its active reflection in observation as its resolution.

translation by Ruth Laskowsky