

“A line is a line is a line . . . ?” A first glance at the works of Terry Haggerty already convinces one of the opposite and opens up the possibility of multilayered perspectives of seeing, which makes a closer look worthwhile. What does this painter reveal to us in the complex structure of lines interlaced with each other with[1] a surface of varnish that is immaculate? (dt. kühl-anmutend; cool-seeming) and perfect in technique?

In the words of Rosalind Krauss, what is characteristic of the oeuvre of the British artist, who has been living in Berlin for some years, is a “centuries-old face-off between line and color,”¹ which he situates in a media-specific discussion. Yet while the US-American art critic posited this face-off regarding the image carrier based on the example of Jackson Pollock’s wild Action Painting, the course of the lines in Haggerty’s work seems controlled and the color brought into a fixed shape. His complex, varnished images painted on canvas or medium-density fiberboard (MDF), or as well as the large-format wall works conceived in situ, reflect Haggerty’s central concerns, questions of proportion, the distribution of color on a surface, and the restricting of it by means of a precise contour, with a promising aftereffect to be pursued[2]. By means of a reduction of the image parameters and a simplicity in the language of forms, he develops his own abstract “alphabet” by means of inner linear structures that are fanned out in parallel bands?. Their appearance is fundamentally shaped by the selection of particular a color (oder: of a particular color (?)). An intensive red—such as in *Middle Round* (p. 41) or *Two Minds* (p. 129)—seems considerably more solid and stable than an airy shade of blue—like that in *Kinetic Friction* (p. 38) or *Untitled* (p. 95)—or a shade of silver—as in *Metallic Pitch II* (p. 59) or *K* (p. 48)—and hence also leads to the favoring of specific forms of contours[3]. Donald Judd emphasizes the interrelationship between the iconography of color and a concept of the structure of an image when he writes: “A red seems to have a particular quality of its own. In a work it retains that quality and yet it is altered and amplified by the context. Its original quality may have suggested the alteration. The idea or quality desired may have required the red.”²

Ideas and characteristics, materials and techniques are mutually dependent on one another. At the same time, it is[4] not possible to separate existing associations from the color red. In the case of Judd’s wood engravings, the distance between the individual stripes also contributes to the spatial impression: a denser progression heightens physical presence, while the shimmering-through of the background evokes a filigree transparency. The strictly contoured patterns of lines in the woodcuts of the protagonists of American Minimal art serve as a reference for Terry Haggerty’s early works in particular. Despite their abstract character, these works—in contrast to Judd—still retain a spark of representative reference since they reveal traces of their motif-historical origins. The eye-catching, signal-like contrast between black and yellow in the work *Hazard* (p. 18) also serves in this combination—as the title of the work already reveals—as a warning color on signs and barrier tapes at hazardous zones.

The horizontal, tripartite direction of *Air Condition* (p. 17) and the fine texture of furrows in *Window* (p. 14) and *Radiator* (p. 57) awaken associations with technical, industrially standardized everyday objects as well as with structural façades of modernist and contemporary high-rise architecture. Nonetheless, it is possible to situate Haggerty’s works not only before the backdrop of the urban space; they also make use (although rarely) of anthropomorphic image sources such as, for instance, *Lungs* (2013) and *Elbows* (p. 75).

The tense relationship, which is significantly shaped by the history of painting (as already mentioned) between the intellectual-conceptual line and the sensory appeal of stimulating color—*dessin* and *couleur*—advanced in the eighteenth century to become the central subject of debate. The goal was to convincingly proclaim the prevailing importance of one of the two “rivals” for the development of art. The line in itself, the drawing in a figurative sense[5], thus no longer corresponded to the mere limiting of a filled-in surface; it instead underwent an increasing ennoblement, since it was possible to recognize the individual signature and the spontaneous flash of inspiration of one artist from the of artist[6] (?) in the lines and hatching. In the form of surface-filling stripes, the lines in Haggerty’s abstract works go beyond this strict opposition and claim an autonomous, specific image-generating status. An intensifying of physical presence shapes the dark monolithic forms in his drawings—framed by fine, colorfully shimmering contour lines, which formulate an outer marker and steer perception as a result of their different shades of color: darker contours allow the framed areas to come to the foreground more intensively while the brightening of individual edges and curves suggests lightness. While the deep black absorbs the gaze, the colorful line has the opposite effect. It acts as an illuminating source of light, structures the interior of the composition, contours it toward the outside, and throws viewers back upon themselves. The question that is thus raised is that of the relationship of form and line, of inside and outside: who holds who and who frames whom here[7]? When, according to Jacques Derrida’s reading of Immanuel Kant in *The Truth in Painting*, the *parergon* (*Zierrat*, or ornament) does not appear as a hermetic boundary, the separation between *ergon* (work) and frame (*parergon*)—hence also in the case of Haggerty—conflates to the benefit of a reception aesthetics-based integration of the viewer that significantly contributes to the development and perfection of the artistic artifact.³

Beyond the purist woodcuts of Donald Judd, Haggerty’s vocabulary also suggests (*erahnen lassen?*) an examination of Frank Stella’s radical monochromes, which negate any mimetic illusionism. While the stripes in Stella’s *Black Paintings*, which were realized at the end of the nineteen-fifties, follow the mostly rectangular canvas, in the *Aluminum Paintings* they separate from the straight lines of the picture carrier, change their direction, buckle or veer. The empty spaces within or at the edge of the composition that were created as a result prompted Stella to cut them away and customize the stretcher frame to the specific motif. These “shaped canvases” achieved prominence in Minimal art, which explored the limits of large-scale panel painting, and of Hard-Edge painting, for example, in the work of Robert Mangold, Ellsworth Kelly, and Kenneth Noland. Through the favoring of deep stretcher frames, the images oscillate between genres; their sculptural character is emphasized. The turning away from classical image formats and the increase in plasticity also characterize Terry Haggerty’s central art-immanent issue. *Memory Fold* (p. 70) and *Out of Light* (p. 69) are among the most recent works that are subordinated to the composition in their formal appearance. Of particular interest to the artist is the contradictory and / or tension with respect to the extent to which the image determines the form or vice versa.⁴ In some of his rectangular works, the structure of stripes distorts the geometric regularity of the painting support in favor of a customizing modification of the edges. Through the examination of Frank Stella that becomes implicit here, he documents his interest in a productive dialogue between the external “shape” of the picture carrier and the painted “pattern.” Yet while the two supplement one another in the work of Stella, Haggerty works with precisely placed contrasts and discrepancies. If the stretcher frame is only cut minimally on one edge, this means that it tapers into an irregular trapezoid, for instance, in the case of *Angular Stare* (p. 71), and thus gives rise to a moment of confusion (*irritation?*).. The eye looks afresh, follows the horizontal orientation of the lines, which “buckle” after a convex curvature in the left section at a two-fold tiered height and run further two-dimensionally parallel to the lower and upper border of the image until they disappear from the gaze bent around the right edge. The parallel lines mold a rhythmic structure with an incisive vitality,

partially becoming detached from the background, and, as a result, open up their own pictorial space, as if the canvas possessed a life of its own.

The heightened plasticity is expressed not only in the “shaped canvases” that have been realized since 2008 but also on the level of the imaginary pictorial space and, namely, in the form of an increasing turning away from the strictly linear compositions of earlier works, which were kept more intensively on the surface, such as *Down, Up* (p. 13) and *Andy’s Candy* (p. 15). Complex labyrinths for the eyes develop through a process of visual perception and not, as is often the case in painting, as a result of a haptic, relief-like surface texture.

The wide range of spatial illusions that develops within the compositions, the confusing alternation of inner and outer, the flowing course of behind and before, the renunciation of fixed concrete points lead at first glance to a moment of disorientation. Repeated looks are required in order to detect the entirety of each specific form by means of a change of perspective. Where is the form situated? The surrounding space neither follows the law of gravity with the palpable above and below with which we are familiar, nor does it offer an unambiguous direction of movement. Similar to picture puzzles or reversible figures, as are familiar, for example, from 3-D postcards of childhood days, the painted “patterns”—among others, *Side by Side* (p. 49), *Syphon* (p. 47), and *Infinite Mask* (p. 46)—lead, depending on the point of view and how the eyes roam, to a spontaneous change in form and perception. The winding and in part overlapping ribbons of color also call to mind topological structures that are familiar from geometry such as the well known Möbius strip, the Penrose triangle, or the prägnanz cube of Gestalt psychology, whose illusionary space “tilts” after longer observation. This manipulation of visual impression results from the “impossibility” of an image of a three-dimensional morphology, in contrast to the possibility of projecting it graphically onto a surface. The Penrose triangle, also called a tribar, is composed of three bars that are each positioned at a right angle to one another and joined together to form a triangle. The form thus goes against several principles of Euclidean geometry, for instance, the law according to which the sum of the angles in a triangle is always 180 degrees. What viewers are confronted with here is the difficulty of intellectually translating the drawing into a sculptural object as well as with the challenge—similar to in the case of some of Terry Haggerty’s works such as *Holding Weight* (p. 51), *Untitled* (p. 119), and *Untitled* (p. 99)—of reading their own distance to the components of the tribar and its position in the sketched space anew again and again. They question the size and opening of the form, attempt to unmask the phenomenon of the optical illusion, this abstract *trompe l’oeil*, and to get to the roots of the confusing ambivalence between two-dimensional planarity and the impression of plastic spatiality that intrudes. While some of the ribbons of color—as in *Reposition* (p. 37), *Out of Light* (p. 69), *Memory Fold* (p. 70), and *Ascend to Descend??* (p. 163)—seem to be compressed and folded over each other on the image carrier, as if they had allowed themselves to be pulled apart and spread out, what dominates in the case of other works is the flowing movement of the gracefully shaped, yet forcefully forward-pushing form—such as *Two Minds* (p. 129) and *Untitled* (p. 127). A dynamic of tension is also evoked by the opposing directions of movement in the case of the work *Untitled* (p. 99), which was realized in the Von Bartha Gallery in Basel, and / or in the surfaces that are sharply angled against one another of *Untitled* (p. 124) as well as in the acrylic drawings that call to mind sculptural artifacts such as Max Bill’s *Unendliche Schleife* (Infinite Loop) or Richard Serra’s *A Matter of Time*.

Nevertheless, what contributes to this visual impression is not only the course of the lines in themselves but also the finely nuanced color gradations—as in *Valor* (p. 11), *Void* (p. 141) and *Sudden Flair* (p. 151); one might think of the illusionistic-vibrating stripes and zigzag patterns of Bridget Riley.⁵ Contrary to most of the representatives of Op Art, Terry Haggerty’s works captivate to a great extent as a result of their monochromy^[8]. When installed as a diptych, these works also assert a particular spatial presence.

The aim of a clear, primarily horizontal fluidity of direction prevails in the case of wall works conceived for a particular location in the form of spatial images in which art-inherent pictorial and real exhibition space coincide. These images obscure the architectonic background—such as *Untitled* (p. 105)—and are composed in part beyond boundaries (*setzen sich teils über Grenzen hinweg?!), while making the (familiar) location appear in a new light, and contributing to an altered reading. Although the colorful layout of the lines in the installation realized in the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles in 2007 (p.116/117) does converge with the surroundings, it is, nonetheless, set in a rich contrast as a result of the interplay with the mottled gray pattern of the flooring, the steps of the two-part staircase, and the course of the railing. The interrupted bands of color, which seem to be rolled inward, interact with the staircase, which is structured half way up by an intermediate level. The lower system of lines, which is only indicated fragmentarily and is concealed behind the rear baseboard and staircase, animates viewers to think the form further[9], and complete it before the inner eye. At the same time, this “passageway” in the museum undergoes an optical reevaluation that culminates at the top end through an additional work that distends the front wall backward in an illusionistic manner, such as in *Untitled* (p. 115). The dark green “pattern” is reflected in the glossy, polished tiles and gives rise to a slight feeling of dizziness. Beyond the primarily optical detection, a physical experience that takes hold of the body occurs at the same time. Since, in general, his works mostly elude to an insightful definition of beginning and end, on its search, the eye is pulled into the folds and absorbed by the black, mysterious abyss that dominates in *Infinite Mask* (p. 46) or the plummeting descent of lines in the work *Syphon* (p. 47).*

In German, the English verb “to transcend” denotes “to go beyond something,” “to exceed something,” “to overcome,” which also refers to the associated noun “transcendence” and / or “transcendancy.” In philosophy and theology, this is understood as a quality beyond sensory, earthly experience and its objects, which in general means the transgression of two realms that are fundamentally separate from one another. The term *transcendentia*, which was already known in antiquity, originally described only a transition without a religious connotation; the verb *transcendere* was also used in the sense of “to surpass.”

The title that Terry Haggerty chose for this monograph thus refers to his efforts to plumb the boundaries of painting in the direction of sculpture and architecture and, therefore, to develop his own language inherent to art. Even without specific knowledge, viewers are able to enter into a reciprocal exchange with the work. The title, which can be understood in part metaphorically, sketches formal spatial effects, rhythms of movement, and, despite the associations evoked, allows freedom for individual readings. Haggerty himself expresses his interest in the classical duality in painting, which exists on two different levels—simultaneously illusionistic and flat, figurative and abstract—as well as the idea that images do not mandatorily call to mind a concrete object but instead shape their own form. As a result, the formal reduction in favor of his characteristic, simplified pictorial vocabulary contrasts with the broad spectrum of optical facets and intertwined, abstract pictorial worlds.

In spite of Haggerty’s obvious examination of structural circumstances on site while simultaneously incorporating structural preconditions, his compositions nevertheless claim the status of painting; the form remains an image and is thrust neither directly onto the wall nor onto a portable carrier as a counterbalance acting before the backdrop of architecture, thus in his solo exhibition in the Center for Contemporary Non-Objective Art (CCNOA) (p.119) in Brussels. Where is the fissure, the “gap” within which line mutates into form and thus claims a physical life of its own? All along the line, Terry Haggerty plays through the conditions of its own possibilities in a self-reflective discussion and leaves traditional categories behind as obsolete.

((Notes))

1 Rosalind Krauss, "Namuth und Pollock: Photographien als Texte lesen," in idem., *Das Photographische* (Munich, 1998), pp. 90–99, here p. 99.

1 Donald Judd, "Kunst und Architektur / Art and Architecture (1983)," in idem., *Complete Writings*. See also Gregor Stemmerich, ed., *Minimal Art: Eine kritische Retrospektive* (Dresden, 1998), pp. 74–91, here p. 76. "Making a form without meaning is a contradiction in itself. And it is also impossible to express a feeling without a form" (ibid., p.83).

1 Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago, 1987).

1 See the author's interview with Terry Haggerty in Berlin in 2011, published in *Von Bartha: Quarterly Report 03 / 11* (Basel, 2011).

1 See Bridget Riley et al., *Cataract 3* (1967) and *Orphean Elegy II* (1978).

[1]Wortwiederholung „with“, wie ließe sich das umgehen? Indem er...(?)

[2](Konsequenz?!) dt.: und ihre Begrenzung durch eine präzise Kontur mit vielversprechender Konsequenz zu verfolgen

[3]wird hier deutlich, dass die Bevorzugung bestimmter Umrißformen und Farben durch den Künstler erfolgt?

[4]Gibt es eine geeignete Konjunktivverbform? Gemäß: laut Judd sei es...

[5]Bedeutet das „im übertragenden Sinne“?

[6]Hier fehlt oder doppelt sich irgendetwas. Dt.: ; stattdessen erfuhr sie eine wachsende Nobilitierung, da man in den Strichen und Schraffuren die individuelle Handschrift und den spontanen Geistesblitz eines Künstlers erkannte

[7]Ließe sich diese Frage umformulieren, so dass „who“ nicht so oft wiederholt wird? Dt.: Wer hält und wer rahmt hier wen?

[8]Hier scheint ein Wort zu fehlen, oder? Dt.: Konträr zu den meisten Vertretern der Op Art bestechen die Werke Terry Haggertys größtenteils durch ihre Monochromie. Oder wäre es besser, den englischen Satz umzustellen?

[9]Könnte man das „think further“ auch anders ausdrücken?