

MANUEL FRANKE – Colormaster X
11 November 2016 – 7 January 2017

There are not many artists in whose work apparent opposites seem to meet with such ease as Manuel Franke. In his work, the autonomous image and the space- and location-based installation, the soft and the hard, the light and the heavy, density and transparency do not exclude each other but co-exist in carefully balanced tension.

Thus, the voluminous, colourful object made of trapezoidal profile sheet, which leads from the exhibition space into the office area of the gallery on the one hand appears almost as a component of the architecture itself. As an ordinary industrial surface material, it squeezes through a crack in the wall and then fans out. On the other hand, the object, despite its massive physical presence and firmness, evokes a spontaneous, far-reaching gesture and has a strongly pictorial effect that can also be experienced from the street through the glass facade.

From the materials Franke uses, he elicits unimaginable effects, while at the same time making the best of their specific characteristics, especially in the creative process. Thus, the softness and malleability of the plaster serves to capture the immediate trace of picturesque gestures, which are then permanently fixed during solidification, so that sculpted wall objects are formed.

What is hard and solid can, in turn, seem liquefied and fluid. The colour which Manuel Franke applies to, and partially removes from, rectangular, small and medium-sized glass plates often evokes a flow of water, and where it appears to expand into two-dimensional swathes or dissolve into individual particles, one might think of cosmic events or of an image in a microscope.

There is a particular similarity to geological structures, such as the diverse images created by nature itself, which arise by cutting through certain types of stone. For example, the optically particularly rich agate stone lends its name (“Achat”) to Manuel Franke’s design and realization of the entire subway station Graf-Adolf-Platz on the new Wehrhahn line in Düsseldorf, which was inaugurated in spring 2016.

Ludwig Seyfarth, November 2016

*Manuel Franke born 1964 in Bonn, Germany.
He lives and works in Düsseldorf, Germany.*