

On Composition

Given the fact that from the Zero Group to Minimalism, going back to Rodchenko or moving up to contemporary monochrome, one group of painters after the other has rejected composition while other artists have used the grid or some other form of geometry to systematize a work, it would seem that in paintings of one color the question is irrelevant. Composition is the name of a painting practice repeatedly disqualified in the history of Modernism.

And yet . . .

From the moment two or three paintings are installed on the same wall, or even with the presence of two paintings on adjacent walls visible together, the question of composition revives itself. What shall we say about red and green, yellow and black, any two colors positioned on walls within our field of vision, or even about two rectangles of the same color (or non-color) that we see in relation to each other and related to the walls of the room in which they are hung.

The convention painters must address is that of the wall as a location for painting, the vertical of its side edges, the horizontal of its ceiling and floor, which echo the top and side edges of the painting, creating a "page" upon which we work, the enlarged field of the new composition.

It is possible to circumvent the compositional effect by painting an entire wall, by adapting paintings to the architecture of the given space. The solution of many painters has been to work with this factor of composition through careful placement of paintings upon a wall, consciously "composing" that page. With paintings which emphasize color this bringing together of forms in the field can propose a new richness, a new quality of sensuality and relationship, a tender approach to composition.

This aspect of painting, its installation, presents a (conscious or unconscious) dilemma to every painter who places a painting on a wall. Another solution has been to create a separate space for every work raising the specter of complete isolation. Faced with this notion one can address the primacy of the one, the icon, the (patriarchal) singularity of the Pure, the Absolute, and question it.

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