

## NATALIA HUG

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Jan Pleitner  
„Who is the Sun“

Natalia Hug is pleased to present *Who is the Sun*, the third solo exhibition by the Düsseldorf-based painter Jan Pleitner.

Conceived as a two-part exhibition together with Galerie Achenbach Hagemeyer in Düsseldorf, both presentations are designed to function independently and as reciprocal reflections: Pleitner is showing “sibling works” in both locations that each have a counterpart in the other exhibition. Although the images range in their aesthetic references, Pleitner has designed for the first time specific partner images that relate to each other, reflecting each other in their character and style of painting. The seriality of the artist’s method thus unfurls in a new direction. Beyond the painting process there is a specific set of actions that revolves around the subject of the series and the language of its own vocabulary. In addition, the concept of reflection always has this function of doubling, reflecting, and opening an (invisible) space.

The series *Night and Space Paintings*, thus titled by the artist because of their domineering darkness, features several pairs: they are either painted on a (plastic) tarpaulin printed with abstract forms, or on canvas with different under paintings or imprints, resulting in the differentiated nature of the surfaces and process. The different undercoats flash through in various places where they have been consciously discreetly or freely painted, so that these places sometimes seem scratched open or to lie hidden under the darker layers. Other partners result from their format or their composition within the image. In their gestures and their sometimes fast painting style, their similar color composition with a bright coral-like substructure and a predominantly black and contrasting painted surface, the works show a new diversity and variance: in some works one thinks one can make out bizarre creatures that evoke Max Ernst’s surrealist wilderness and imply a psychological component. Through research and travel, Pleitner has developed an interest in prehistoric and archaic cultures (of South America and Asia) whose imagery and symbolism (such as the cosmological) have exerted considerable influence on the new works. This concrete reference is combined with elements of science fiction, the hypothetical other.

In particular, the two monolithic objects painted in a similar way to the paintings in the exhibition seek a connection to the (architectural) monument and thus to the concept of representation. The objects form a counterweight to the wall works and may seem curiously exposed in the space. The enigmatic nature of these objects, which may be considered a reference to the monolith in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, builds a bridge to the prehistoric and the question of the codification and interpretation of past cultures, of the presence of the absent. Here, painting is placed in the third dimension, as it were, through the simplest geometrical shape: a statement in the space.

Jagged works structured in spacious fields, reminiscent of stained-glass windows from the 1950s, show a clear interest in the emancipation of light and shade through color, that is to say, a subject within the discourse of painting. And other works are softly and organically painted and reveal their lichen-like white undercoat, though the connecting element remains the general (vertical) structure and vividness of the works. For the most part, the impression is psychedelic and sometimes vertiginous, so that the eye starts looking for a foothold amidst the constant whirring. The works seem almost sculptural due to their constantly changing foregrounds, middle grounds, and backgrounds.

The theme of darkness is reflected in the fluorescent paint used for the first time in some works, which gives the works their own cryptic presence, even at night. Two *Milky Ways* in a parallel universe. Through the light-storing paint, the component of darkness is addressed as a second reality, and with it the separation of the two worlds and their simultaneity. The paint is literally charged with energy, generating nocturnal activity comparable to the bioluminescence of microscopic creatures or the northern lights in the Arctic sky. However, even in daylight these neon colors have the effect of deepening the contrast, which suggests the opening up of optical spaces and then shatters them into separate layers. When looking at it, this visual manipulation has a particularly hypnotic effect: it is like looking into the eye of a typhoon. This optical entanglement takes place through the texture and the blurred areas that are separated from each other in places by strong delineation, similar to focusing a photographic lens. A suction effect takes place

through the synapse-like framework that is similar to sensory deception or manipulation.

A dystopian gloom emanating from the works brings together different aspects, such as formal references to the work of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner or to the fantastical and literary science-fiction tales of Ursula Le Guin. For even the crystalline nature of the works picks up the concept of the transcendental in abstract expressionism, simultaneously invoking the cosmological aspect of the works through the creation of the parallel universe of the twin exhibition.

Pleitner (b.1984, Oldenburg, Germany) graduated from Dusseldorf Academie (prof. Tal. R and Jorg Im-mendorf). His work was recently exhibited at Kerlin Gallery, Dublin (2018), Philipp Haverkamp Galerie, Berlin (2017), PARKHAUS im Malkastenpark, Düsseldorf (2017), Kunstverein Heppenheim (2017), David Achenbach Collection, with Henning Strassburger, Wuppertal (2017) among other venues.