

AUREL SCHEIBLER



Norbert Kricke, *Raumplastik Schwarz-Rot*, 1955, Steel, painted

Norbert Kricke, Ernst Wilhelm Nay

Linie und Farbe

Gallery Weekend

Saturday, 28.04, 11 am -7 pm

Sunday, 29.04, 11 am -7 pm

Exhibition, 27.04 - 07.07.2018

Line and colour, surface and space preoccupied two of the outstanding artists of the second half of the 20th century in Germany. One of them developed a new idea of sculpture from the line by turning it to a poetic symbol of space and time, of space-time. The other one gave colour the primacy in the surface arrangement of painting and signified the end of Modernism with his late, „elementary“ paintings.

The urge to be nameless, to merely lay a trace that doesn't have to be compared to or remind of anything is characteristic of Norbert Kricke (1922-1984) since the early 1950s. His shift from the physical to the simple, elementary and nonetheless ambiguous is radical. He discovers the line that is no longer engaged to constitute sculptural volumes. Instead the line itself, with its unboundedness, becomes a plastic medium. In his own words: „Line is a form of movement, movement is a form of time, never a limitation of surface, nor an outline of bodies – always a space-showing phenomenon, an openness“.

The presence of colour dominated the image of Ernst Wilhelm Nay's work (1902-1968) in collective awareness so strongly as of hardly any other German artist. In our exhibition, however, Nay is shown as an artist of the line, with his drawings from the 1950s and 1960s, which do without any colour. Nay's drawing knows no rest. It is a constant transformation of a moved one, who's mobilizing the dormant surface.

Works on paper created in the 1950s reveal Nay's implementation of the musical inspirations of that time in rhythmical ink lines: straight lines that abruptly change their direction and dynamic brushstrokes cover the sheets, while smaller spots set the tone like notations. Pencil drawings from the 1960/61 expose rotation of a graphic gear. Narrow spiral coils make bouncing expansion of the discs visible, the imbalance within the circles, accumulations contrast with empty sections like quanta of energy. The late felt-tip pen drawings from 1966 to 1968 shift from the musical to the formal. The flowing lines that embrace the straight figural sequences might be soft and supple, pointed and retrograde, circling around islands or formed in delta-shapes. Frequently, extreme oppositions are united on one sheet. Werner Haftmann has described them as „life arabesques“. That's only in these last works where something fateful, with shattering psychograms, brakes through. One of the rarest things, to be found only in drawings as by Klee, Kirchner, Wols and implied in Kricke's late sculptures, is the denomination of the existence reflected fully by itself.

A juxtaposition of Norbert Kricke's colour sculptures from the 1950s to the 1980s and the linear drawings by Nay is a long-cherished desire and is presented here for the first time. It shows the two artists who pursue totally different intentions and yet have a basic commonness. While Kricke captures the movement in space, his lines setting directions and conducting the perception of the space through their dynamic, Nay remains captured by the surface. His concern was not to describe the space. The poles here are distinct: the line in space or the line describing the surface.

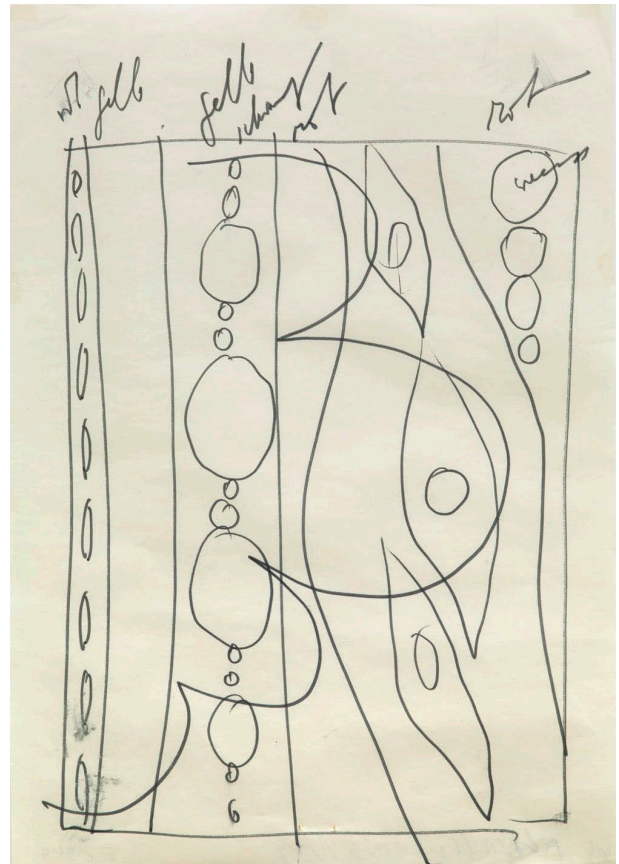
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The dynamic of the line is accentuated by Kricke through a conscious use of colour. It does not refer to any content through associations, but instead it suggests movement, can accelerate or slow down. It seeks to overcome the material dimension and to emphasize the moment of movement. He writes. „I found out that white and chrome yellow, when shown in space as a line, have the highest motion quality. While lineaments with angles, tending to right angles, require colours of tranquillity, heaviness such as brown, black, English-red, grey. etc., I often use blue when I'd like to put a special emphasis on the spatial value of an entire sculpture or its part. I've never used colour for aesthetic or decorative reasons...“.

Nay's relation to colour is of a similar concern. He categorically denies the use of colour as an emotional expression: „I reject the evaluation of colour as an emotional value. The expressive value of a picture lies in the spiritual structure, the spiritual-sensational formulation of the surface“. Nay proclaims the complete elimination of illusion, an apparent, artist-created appearance, as the ultimate goal of his painting. In this way, the true nature of the colour as a surface got visible, as well as a sensory image of a human.

Both artists never lost sight of the human in their work. It remains the reference point and the benchmark of their thinking. It is the liberal understanding and the possibility of a spiritual intuition that unites their works.

Nay writes: „The spiritual, that is, the art today, is determined by the idea that the utmost of abstraction is capable of making the most human of a person visible. A human has never appeared more clearly than in the freedom of abstraction.“ And Kricke: „In sculpture, space always means freedom“.



Ernst Wilhelm Nay, *Untitled*, 1966, Felt-tip pen on paper