

## Questioning Dirk Salz

### artnet News

1. I've read your biography in multiple places online, but I'd love to hear it in your own words. Can you tell me briefly how you got into art, how your work has evolved over the years, and who influenced you along the way?

I decided to let you have the long story:

I grew up in a kind of artistic familial environment. My mother and my grandfather were playing instruments and drew and painted a lot. Luckily they very early began to teach me that. Both of them as well as my father were delighted by art. There were lots of books on art and artists at our home that I could discover. Music and art were topics that were present at all time, - yet not on a professional basis, because nobody within our family made this his profession.

For the last three years in high school an artist instead of a professional educator taught us arts. He offered me private lessons in painting, drawing and art history and I was happy to take that.

After finishing high school and considering what to study, it was not even on my mind to study art. From today's perspective I would say, that my urge to express myself in such a way was not yet strong enough at that time. I stepped into an engineering study program first. After University I worked as an IT analyst and later as an IT manager for an insurance group. – Yet I never gave up painting and drawing. End of the 90's I started to make contact to artists and got as time goes by into a continuous dialogue about art. Simultaneously I took the chance to get feedback on my own paintings and drawings. So, I was able to develop my skills and discover my personal topics within arts.

I started with figurative paintings most of them inspired by nature. After a while began to abstract first by choices of color and afterwards by more and more dissolving forms. My paintings were getting informal at that time. The intention of course became more and more to rather transport for example a 'feeling of nature', than a picture of nature, the things that are behind or in between or under the surface... and topics that determine our lives without being obvious, - like time and space or for example rule and accident.

From a more painterly perspective it became clear, that I'm mostly interested in the analysis of transparency and the impact of color and relations of color as well as relations of line and space. This way was mainly influenced by American expressionists like Barnett Newman or Mark Rothko as well as Ad Reinhard. The engagement in analyzing and checking the borderlines of paintings in difference to objects were impacted a lot by the work of Blinky Palermo and Imi Knoebel of course. Many others could easily be added, meaning finding my way would have been unthinkable without knowledge and respect of the history of art.

2. Most painting needs to be seen in person to be properly appreciated, but that seems to be particularly true with your work, which has a very deliberate, reflective surface. Can you explain how you achieve this effect and what about it interests you formally?

First, not all my works have that reflections, another series of works has matte surfaces, which are nevertheless special and can only really be perceived live as well.

But to answer your question: The gloss itself is first of all an inherent quality of the used material, which are two component resins. The resin itself is transparent and clear. I mix it with very small amounts of pigments or pigment pastes, so that it stays transparent. I pour the resin on the lying painting and distribute it with a special roller. Only a part of the painting gets pigmented resin. After one colored layer there's always one layer of pure clear resin to plan the surface again. So, step by step, layer by layer arises the painting. 10 – 20 layers are required.

The composition of the pigmented overlaying fields is operated following a mockup, that I create upfront on the computer. With the composition, I try to achieve a 'likeable' or maybe ideal - relation of the chosen elements of the composition. – The reflections on the surface are destroying the chosen relations and create others, new ones, completely subjective ones for the viewer. The composition feels like hiding itself behind the reflecting surface. The viewer realizing that is forced into a dialogue with the painting trying to encrypt it, by changing position and sight. The viewer isn't completely sure, what's composition and what's reflection? and at the end of the day: what is the artwork?

As a matter of fact, my entire work is kind of a philosophical analysis and all about perception. I'm tracing phenomena that are able to touch strings inside of us. Be it by creating ambiguous views, by intentional connecting contradictions or create phenomena of light, color and space or...

3. Many of your paintings feature hardened streams of resin or paint on the side. Why do you choose to leave these references to the paintings' construction rather than keeping the whole work pristine?

The works are at no point pristine. They pretend to be – of course. But attentive observations will show the viewer that lines are not as straight as on first sight, that the surface has little bumps or tiny little holes resulting from bursted air bubbles. The edges are not straight but soft and flowing.

The hardened streams and drips are to the same category. It's all about creating tension. I love to play with contradictions, because they create tension.

The clean, cold and pristine looking surface is a contradiction to the small 'failures' in the painting and as well to those sensitive and not at all controllable streams and drips. It's by the way the same with the contradiction regarding the lightness of the transparent layers and the heavy and solid wooden body of the paintings. – Or the depth that somehow draws the viewer in and the reflection that keeps him out...

4. My introduction to your work was through your painting, but I'm also curious about your drawing and how the two sides of your practice are in dialogue with each other. I read that your drawn works tend to be informed by painting, rather than the other way around. Is this true? What is the relationship between these two mediums for you?

Yes, at a certain point in time I was searching for another, more direct expression of what I was working on in my paintings. At that time I was working with large spatulas to apply oil paint on wood. That created compositions mainly structured by horizontal lines. In analogy to that I started to draw horizontal lines and create a rhythm by interrupting them and changing distances between the lines (just like they were created by using the spatulas). In the following I decided to take a thick piece of paper with rough edges as a lineal which *caused* the wanted interruptions of the lines arising by accident. It creates the impression of an overall picture with a vertical structure caused by interruptions, yet it is in fact nothing vertical but all horizontal lines.

With the drawings I love the direct and uncorrectable way. For me it provides a very particular expression of the very moment in time and time as a whole.