

ADAM HENRY

an aspen's inability to be a pine

18 January - 16 February 2013

For his first solo exhibition in Europe, American artist Adam Henry chose to show paintings that question light, colour and the possibilities that they have to express themselves in pictorial space.

A large painting awaits visitors on the first floor. Consisting of 16 rectangles measuring about 40 x 30 cm, it perfectly symbolizes the search for fragmentation and decomposition that runs through the artist's work. The colours are meticulously scattered using sprayed paint and evoke certain colours of the spectrum of light seen through a prism. The mathematical progression (a rectangle multiplied by 4 and then again by 4), repetition of colours, with the variety of angles allowing a dynamic perception of the painting.

As we contemplate the history of art, we realize that painting is constantly accountable to light. One of the 20th century artists to take a very close interest in this was Laszlo Moholy-Nagy in the 1920s, who advocated an activation of space via dynamic-constructive energy systems. The idea of replacing static values with dynamic values is recurrent and can also be found earlier, in the work of the Russian Constructivists and the Italian Futurists and later among kinetic artists. *"The first projects looking towards a system of dynamic-constructive system of forces can be only experimental demonstration devices for testing the connection between man, material forces and space"*. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's description in a way applies to how the work of Adam Henry is perceived: this activated dynamic space using a specific technique and personal reference system; effects of diffusion, dispersion and disappearance are linked to geometric imperatives: overlaps, interlacing, splits, repetitions, superimpositions, etc. Some paintings create an illusion effect, but there is more to it than the optical trickery. Beyond the blur that the artist manages to create, we feel there is a desire to take us further.

At first glance, this painting is on the way to becoming a visual location, divorced from conventional reality, from the world of objects and then becomes an autonomous mathematical and philosophical space. A painting leading to travel, wanderings and inner journeys. But viewing this work should enable an odyssey of the mind. One could say, paraphrasing Gaston Bachelard, that the painting *"through the strength of its alchemy, through its colour-imparting life, can create a whole world, if only it can find the dreamer to make it happen"*. These works are open, initially they appeal to the eye and then they dispense with the volatile, pure aesthetic pleasure in order to assume their autonomy and in a second phase become more complex, darker, more earthly.

You feel a thought in action lurking in the background, behind the colours, intersections, and feel the energy in movement behind the collisions and shifts. We perceive a life, a breath. And joy too.