

伊根弗朗茨：啟動繪畫

文／丹尼爾謝勒 Daniel Sherer, Mousse Magazine, 2019

繪畫，在近期被普遍認為正在強勢回歸，而伊根弗朗茨的最新作品也在其中更強烈的展現了新氣象。2019年9月，弗朗茨於紐約 Team Gallery 個展中展出之最新作品系列更是突破了新的繪畫境界。具體而言，不僅是他的創作方法，甚至所有最新作品，都體現所謂「啟動繪畫」（啟動原文 switch-on，為開啟電源之意）的新態度。

弗朗茨創作大型畫作，畫幅宏大且意境豐富。由於他對感知與概念不定性具有濃厚興趣，畫作中可見融入與抽離的辯證。在他最新作品中，一股強大、多核心的能量，從規模到形式延伸至整個主要的視覺區域，以高清晰度型態展現一或更簡而言之，以明亮形式呈現。弗朗茨運用顏色結構，創造出整體性。

在弗朗茨的畫作中，他精心測量視覺空間，並運用鮮豔的色塊製造強烈對比，突顯了畫面的流動。利用細微的變化、明顯的斷層線和位移、透過線性輪廓的穩定性和局部色塊置入的交替運用，產生畫面變化，進而改變視覺空間。儘管弗朗茨的畫作經常看似完整無縫，事實上他所採用的各項技巧皆與封閉式的構圖觀念（無論感知、詮釋或其他方面）背道而馳。因此，在變幻的畫面中，可明顯感受斷層線、裂痕的存在，如同地表下方的地震活動。

在《夜車》（2019）作品中，不同的粉色以極微妙的方式相互交織，相同中又見些微不同的差異，粗略分析即可感受弗朗茨對於特定辯證式微妙的偏愛。此技巧在本作品中尤為顯著，另外在《科隆 → 紐約連線》（2019）也同樣可見。該畫作中，粉色不僅象徵普普藝術色彩記憶復甦，也代表它的斷然否定，進而創造出一種微型的崇高性。

然而，儘管用色鮮明、極具魅力，弗朗茨的手法亦可驟變，創作出比任何其他大膽前衛的當代藝術更為幽幻、奇異的作品。如此古怪的元素可見於《天使博士》（2019）（至少就細節上的奇特性而言），畫作中以三個不同顏色、狀似裸露大腦的色塊來表現中世紀聖托馬斯阿奎那的頭像。聖托馬斯阿奎那以專研天使學著稱，人稱天使博士。畫作中的頭像極為抽象，僅是一種意象的呈現。這個看似排泄物，又像某種結構組合的頭像，並非只是怪異的裝飾點綴，而是深深嵌入了畫面主體；儘管如此，整體作品仍極富吸引力。

這個中世紀意象雖然看似有些邪惡，但其中的奇特性迷人，且意義深遠。化做謎樣、紋章似的圖塊，留下許多不解之謎，面無表情的圖像，只能透過奇異、另類的特質探知一二。就彷彿頭像右方蒼穹平面上盤旋著的多色十字架，以純淨、抽象的色彩象徵漂浮的天使。

弗朗茨了解無論在視覺或超視覺上，色彩引發的反應遠比第一眼所見的多，且數種意義間彼此相互關聯。而色彩核心的多義性正是弗朗茨複雜的創作攻防遊戲中的要件。這樣的技巧有時營造出和諧的色彩，賦予畫面寧靜的氛圍（或至少舒適的感受）。卻更常迫使觀者注意到他在條紋中彩色和非彩色線性對比的強調，展現出表面的流動力，並將觀者置於未定的視覺空間、跨類別間，感受之中產生的不確定性。由於這樣的技巧在前景和背景的分配方面產生了不確定性，條紋運用引發某種焦慮感，而「破碎」條紋（對比性更強的條紋類型）尤是。

在弗朗茨的繪畫中，最為重要的表現為將形式動態化，徹底啟動視覺性；即透過特定繪畫技巧的運用，引發視覺動勢。這正是「啟動繪畫」的意涵，恰如其分的名稱說明了弗朗茨的繪畫創作概念。的確，我們欣賞他的畫作時，彷彿看見開關啟動，將大量的光投射至作品的內在色彩結構及其幾何輪廓上。這與溫蒂卡洛斯劃時代的專輯《Switched-On Bach》（1968）中運用穆格電子合成器產生電音的形式相

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呼應，為巴哈百年曆史中的重大變化，彷彿有意與琴瑪麗斯特勞布和丹妮爾休伊特同年推出的電影《安娜·瑪達蓮娜·哈巴編年紀事》對照，這是一部平鋪直述、樸實記錄音樂家故事的黑白電影作品。也無形中作為 1960 年代「巴洛克」流行的另類選擇（現在大家主要記得的可能是奧斯汀鮑爾荒唐怪誕的蕾絲服裝）。

事實上，這與弗朗茨的作品別具關聯。弗朗茨常以獨特的方式，將高度抽象性與犀利的幽默融合於畫作中，這在他《溫蒂卡洛斯》(2019) 作品中顯然可見。畫作風格界於嚴肅和複雜的諷刺之間，以抽象的肖像為構圖，呈現歡慶、喜樂的氛圍，在畫作中央溫蒂卡洛斯的「頭」上放了類似桌巾的物品，彷彿藉由他《Switched-On Bach》專輯封面上，巴哈白色假髮與蕾絲領結的經典造型，來向他致敬。

此處觀者面臨雙重轉換：以彩色呈現巴哈豐富多變的電音，再完美轉換至電子音樂先驅溫蒂卡洛斯跨越二元性別的黑白隱喻（專輯封面打印時仍為沃爾特卡洛斯），溫蒂為當代音樂界最早變性的藝人之一（無疑地，「變」(switching) 字具有（或者說揭示）不只一個層次的涵義）。由左至右、由上至下觀察，即可發現畫作透過色彩的複雜轉換，巧妙地呈現出這個里程碑。而其中的對角線捷徑上為飾有花邊的白色色塊，象徵領結、假髮、甚至是巴洛克長袍所蘊含的性別流動性，最終觀畫者無法確定究竟白色色塊代表的是假髮、桌巾、頭像，還是三者皆是。畫風較不細膩的藝術家可能會大力突顯主體的女性特質，然而弗朗茨運用高度抽象性和柔和的色調，巧妙地代替了這樣誇飾手法。產生的模稜歧義增加了畫作的張力，構建強大的視覺隱喻，傳達出肖像主角的複雜層次和重要角色。

不同於斯特勞布和休伊特電影中隱含的主張，弗朗茨著重於 1960 年代巴洛克流行中較不純粹的面向，邀請觀者重新思考當年溫蒂卡洛斯突破古典音樂界僵化的感官認知，以現代手法演譯，藉此了解他的繪畫技巧：鮮明的色彩、分離與重聚的戲劇性、以不同角度鋪陳與疊加的圖形、不同色域的錯置與呼應、淡出和再現的線條、調整和變化的條紋，融合成為最佳示例。

這種形式亦說明弗朗茨作品為綜合性創作，不僅在於其抽象與象徵的表現，其歷史方面亦然。例如：畫作中看似運用現代主義中硬邊繪畫整齊分隔的方法，卻在關鍵處反其道而行，破壞制式構圖，體現自由風格，從而以自由表現為繪畫的最終目的。

因此，弗朗茨採用的技法與約翰羅斯金所說的「致命新穎性」全然相反。對此弗朗茨並不介意，因為他的新穎性完全真實、不造作，且他對使用的媒材所具有的力量信心十足。然而，他也從不以純粹抽象或具體的精神客體表現。

弗朗茨有些作品體現了幻覺技法和形式失真之間直截了當的辯證，不受其它次要問題或重疊敘述的影響，如同《早晨之後：科博》(2019) 畫作中，以熟悉的巴塞隆納展覽館中的現代雕像象徵意象作為主要指涉，運用直接、優雅的技法，既不搶走畫作主題風頭，也不會轉移視覺焦點。

即使當畫作中有明確的建築指涉意象，亦是如此。例如：在《科隆 → 紐約連線》作品中，以圖樣／手繪方式進行書法般地揮灑，跳脫常規框架。在彎曲、充滿手繪感的線條下，可見科隆大教堂尖頂的影子，正因為如此，抽象與具象間的正向張力也得以保留，甚而強化了。在其他情況下，出現在畫作中的建築可能會佔據畫作的視覺焦點，然而在此作品中，建築增強了繪畫特有的歧異性。

當兩個對立的系統發生碰撞，其中一個有控制、能無限延伸，另一個具有飽和的色彩以及獨立、有限的視覺表現方式，會是什麼情況呢？其中一種可能就像《輻射中的女士》(2019)，畫作的名稱為大衛林區 1977 年的電影《橡皮頭》當中一個鬼怪般的角色。作品隱含電影人物的指涉，帶有複雜的符號功能，同時融合了電影的音樂／聽覺以及聯覺面向，緊密結合。畫作靈感來自林區這部極為怪異奇幻電影中的一幕，更確切地說，受到了電影配樂的啟發。那令人不安的工業音樂，像生鏽的齒輪不停摩擦的聲音，帶著尖銳餘音，在畫作中轉換成更為明亮、強力的視覺語言。

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《輻射中的女士》為弗朗茨迄今最具野心、最巨幅的作品，既隱喻鬼魅出沒的房屋，帶有電影邪異的色彩，同時又像是樂譜，而樂譜上的符號遭受明顯的破壞。起初彷彿隨性抒發，但後來發現整個音符系統都重新改寫了。從一開始映入眼簾的簡單音符圖形，看似譜出和諧旋律，然而仔細查看後發現，弗朗茨最後以歪斜、不連貫的路徑為繪畫與音符的辯證做結。

無論是否模仿樂譜形式，關於對立符號系統的碰撞，最明顯的體現在於不僅彩色元素與不均勻的黑白線條緊密地結合，同時存在著對稱的概念順序，甚至對稱的視覺順序。畫面中最主要的大型色塊上下相連，兩個區域具有相同的視覺重量，上黑下藍綠。上層的黑色產生黑藍水平線條的錯覺，干擾了周遭的垂直條紋。可以把它想成形象化的電流：黑色或甘草灰色的細線，構成彎曲的核心，從中蜿蜒而出，橫跨畫幅。白色油彩以有些明確、有些隨性的插入方式滴落，形成現代藝術史上極為罕見的，白色陰影效果矛盾論。或許這在法蘭西斯培根的某些作品中可見到，但比起巴洛克尖叫教皇的描繪，對觀畫者而言，此處的運用較為平實、直接，且某種程度上，較為單純。

而左右兩線條又具有顯著的繪製差異：左方的線條下方滴落白色顏料，超越其物理以及自身常規的限制，展現物理學中重力對繪畫不可避免的影響；而右方則為一條工整、乾淨的線條。在此弗朗茨運用獨特的色彩強調方式，成功實現了線性色彩的可能性。

透過這樣的方式，以及局部色彩符號提供畫作解讀重要線索，不僅為自身傳統，也為其蘊含的繪畫歷史，構築重新形式化及重新意指。弗朗茨相當明白，有必要在其特定的線條、色彩、指涉／符號學範疇中，展現相互關係。透過同時運用這些技法，顯示其運作、互動模式，以吸引觀者注意。

甚至可能有人會說，這種表現手法才是弗朗茨繪畫的主題，至少在他最近這一系列的畫作是如此。然而，這並不表示我們要扼殺或消除幻想，即便在全然抽象的畫境下亦是如此（畫作必須有一定的指涉物件，如《早晨之後：科博》中的垂直元素。然而這個例子又更為複雜，因為指涉物件不是非藝術物品，而是作為現代建築典範的藝術實例，亦即前文提及之路德維希密斯凡德羅和莉莉萊希設計的 1929 年巴塞隆納展覽館。

但其實恰恰相反：著名藝術作品和卓越現代建築代表的次元運用，更加強化了幻覺感受。僅以內部框架呈現，暗示其存在，卻也在某種意義上，彌補了圖像周圍沒有任何實際框架的情形。此處，我們面臨源自擴展場域，所謂物質支持主題化的情況。透過與建築（就繪畫而言，不具框架或附屬物的藝術）的對話，來感受其存在。對於弗朗茨而言，化成了繪畫媒材，做為他藝術創作的一種內部框架。此舉構成弗朗茨繪畫極富美感的一部分，讓觀者對於作品的創作過程充滿好奇，而解答可能只能藉由仔細查看畫布本身來略窺一二。

如同其他面向，就此而言，弗朗茨的藝術不是非黑即白，而是兼容並蓄。他採用綜合性的技法，充分運用分析模式，甚至在以往無互動的類別之間，探索可能的發展。值得注意的是，弗朗茨在繪畫領域的新發展，正好出現在擴展領域潮流逐漸消退的時刻，現今推崇的媒介特異性，不僅改變了當代藝術的面貌，也出奇不意地成為蓬勃發展的藝術形式。如同所有創新，這項發展引起了廣泛探索，且幸運的是，這樣的探索旅程相當值得。

進入繪畫內在世界，就如同一趟旅程，要了解弗朗茨對於「啟動」繪畫想法更是如此。如果要找個更貼切的隱喻來深入了解作品的內在邏輯，巴爾內特·紐曼（Barnett Newman）的諷刺名言最能充分說明弗朗茨的藝術成就。他曾說：「美學之於藝術家就如同鳥類學之於鳥類」，這句話至今仍可用來貶抑那些過度執迷於理論，而將理論和實踐本末倒置的人。¹而弗朗茨不拘泥於既存的美學理論，順意而為，在創作過程中探尋各式可能性，終而展翅高飛。然而，不同於珀西·比希·雪萊（Percy Bysshe Shelley）詩中的雲雀，自高處翱翔，飛向更高看不見的太虛，弗朗茨以更平易近人的方式，吸引觀者的注意，挑戰觀者，讓觀者從基礎到至高境界，一路追尋他的繪畫快速發展軌跡。

1. 約翰·P·歐尼爾，《巴爾內特·紐曼：精選著作與訪談》（紐約：克諾夫出版社，1990年），第25頁。

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丹尼爾·謝勒 (Daniel Sherer, 生於 1963 年) 於普林斯頓大學建築學院教授建築歷史與理論, 亦曾任教於耶魯大學建築學院 (2008-2017) 以及哥倫比亞大學建築、城市規劃與保護學院研究所 (1998-2017)。2000 年, 謝勒獲得哈佛大學藝術與建築史系博士學位。研究領域大多與建築有關, 包括人文建築的現代接受; 建築、藝術與設計相互作用之義大利現代主義; 義大利文藝復興與巴洛克式建築; 當代建築; 編史學與理論; 當代藝術。他也針對建築和藝術主題, 到世界各地演講, 並於眾多歐美期刊發表文章, 其中包括《Artforum》、《AA File》、《Perspecta》、《Zodiac》、《Assemblage》、《Domus》、《The Journal of Architecture》、《Design Book Review》、《Giornale dell'Architettura》、《Podtatch》。謝勒翻譯曼弗雷多·塔夫里 (Manfredo Tafuri) 的著作《文藝復興詮釋: 君主、城市、建築師》(Interpreting the Renaissance: Princes, Cities, Architects), 由耶魯大學出版社於 2006 年發行, 獲得了尼古拉·佩夫斯納爵士圖書獎 (Sir Nikolaus Pevsner Book Award)。最近, 謝勒於普林斯頓大學建築學院策劃了《阿爾多·羅西: 類比城市的建築與藝術》展覽 (Aldo Rossi: The Architecture and Art of the Analogous City; 2018)。

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Egan Frantz: Switched-On Painting

By Daniel Sherer, Mousse Magazine, 2019

Egan Frantz's latest work reinforces the widespread impression of painting's full-throated return. With his most recent set of works, exhibited in September 2019 in a solo show at Team Gallery in New York, he enters into uncharted territory. More precisely, one may situate not only his approach, but his entire recent body of work, as a manifestation of a new attitude toward the medium that one might call "switched-on painting."

Frantz produces large canvases that are ambitious in scope and packed with incident. One also notes a dialectic of participation and distance, which goes hand in hand with his strong interest in perceptual and conceptual ambiguity. In his most recent work, a wide-ranging, polycentric energy extending from scale to format to the widest expanses and major divisions of the visual field manifests itself with remarkable lucidity, or—more simply—with a certain brightness of form. Color is the structural means of this achieved unity.

Across Frantz's paintings, passages of vivid color stand out sharply against measured visual fields, punctuating the overall flow. The fields themselves are inflected by subtle shifts, visible fault lines, and palpable displacements that make the pictorial surface vibrate as they alternate between the stability of linear contours and the disruption effected by localized chromatic intrusions. Everything in Frantz's approach—despite the appearance of seamlessness that marks many of his paintings—militates against the idea of closure (perceptual, hermeneutic, or otherwise). Hence the fault lines: fractures that, like seismic movements emerging from beneath the surface, make their presence inescapably felt in the shifting pictorial terrain.

Even the most cursory examination of *Night Drive* (2019), where pinks jostle against other pinks in extra-subtle fashion, pitting sameness against slightly different non-sameness, reveals a preference for a certain dialectical subtlety. This technique comes to the fore in this work more than anywhere else in his output, except possibly *Köln → NY Connection* (2019). Here, too, pink becomes a sign for not only a reactivation of Pop chromatic memory but also its determinate negation, which leads to something like a miniature sublimity.

Yet for all of its brightness and charm, Frantz's approach can abruptly modulate to produce passages that are no less ghostly, no less bizarre, than any other of the more or less outlandish moments of contemporary art. They find their nonlinear equivalent (at least as far as a certain strangeness of detail is concerned) in the putative head, more abstract than anything else and only quite remotely mimetic, of Thomas Aquinas himself, dubbed Doctor Angelicus in the Middle Ages for his expertise in angelology. Comprised of a triple core of exposed brain-like shapes of different colors, this head seems somehow fecal, somehow structural, not decoratively scatological, but deeply inscribed into the pictorial texture despite the evident surface appeal of *The Angelic Doctor* (2019).

Such oddities are attractive and profound, despite their somewhat baleful medievalizing presence, here reduced to an enigmatic, almost heraldic blotch. They raise as many questions as they answer, if only for their unexpected, slightly offbeat quality, transmitted all the more effectively because they are so deadpan, as are the diversely colored crosses hovering in some flattened ether to the right of the saint, like levitating angelic presences of pure, abstract color.

Frantz is alert to the fact that color—both pictorial and extra-pictorial—has the power to elicit more responses than might appear possible at first glance, and just as many associations situated at the crossroads of several meanings. This polysemy at the heart of color is central to the complex game of thrust and parry with his canvases that Frantz is playing. At times, this aspect of his approach produces chromatic harmonies that give some of his pictures a relatively more tranquil—or at least a comfortable—feel. More often, however, one is compelled to notice the way he emphasizes linear oppositions of the chromatic and the non-chromatic in stripes, with all of the power of surface vibrancy and all the potential to induce the indeterminacy that is generated when placing the observer in a visual space that is unresolved, and between categories, that this implies. For since this device gives rise to a condition of uncertainty as to the apportioning of foreground and background, striping—even more so when one is dealing with his "broken" stripe, a kind of stripe raised to a higher power of ambivalence—induces a certain type of anxiety.

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In Frantz's pictorial universe the categorical imperative of the dynamization of form reigns supreme, to the point of achieving a completely activated visuality, an evocation of optical movement through the mobilization of specific pictorial techniques. This is what is meant by "switched-on painting," the artist's own apt designation for what he is doing with his preferred medium. Indeed, when we look at his canvases a switch is seemingly thrown, casting a flood of light onto both the work's inherent chromatic structure and its geometric outlines. These are illuminated by a kind of synesthetic equivalent of the Moog synthesizer's electrified sound produced by Walter/Wendy Carlos in his epochal album *Switched-On Bach* (1968)—a significant fold within the centuries-old Bach reception that reads, if not as a conscious corrective to Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet's *The Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach* of the same year, an almost pious filmic reconstruction marked by a certain lyrical, black-and-white austerity, then as an unconscious alternative tied to the "Baroque" side of the 1960s (now chiefly remembered in the absurd travesty of Austin Powers's lacy outfits).

Actually the last reference is the most revealing, as one finds in Frantz's production as well a unique fusion of high abstraction and dry wit. This is evident in *Wendy Carlos* (2019), which teeters over the edge of seriousness into modes of complex irony. This picture constitutes a kind of abstract portrait marked by equal parts celebration and mirth, visible above all in the placement of a doily-like object on the "head" of Wendy/Walter Carlos at the painting's center, as if to honor the protagonist represented through an evocation of the powdered wig and lacy cravat the composer sported on the iconic cover of the album *Switched-On Bach*.

Here the observer is confronted by a double transposition: one that moves without missing a beat from a chromatic evocation of the electronic translation of Bach's polyphonic richness to an achromatic allusion to the effective transcendence of the gender binary attained by the synth pioneer herself, Wendy Carlos (still Walter when the album cover image was printed), one of the earliest on the contemporary music scene to switch gender. (Needless to say, "switching" here acquires, or rather discloses, more than one level of meaning.) This milestone is deftly recoded by the complex shift from one color key to another that becomes apparent as one reads the painting from side to side, from top to bottom, and ultimately in the short cut between the two readings articulated along the diagonal, emphasizing a frilly whiteness that alludes simultaneously to the cravat and the wig itself, and ultimately to the gender-bending potentials inherent in Baroque drag. Ultimately this itinerary leaves the viewer in a state of productive uncertainty as to whether the white area represents a wig, a doily, the head of the figure, or all three at once. A less subtle artist might have played up the camp side of this subject, yet the potential for exaggeration that is clearly present here is cleverly counteracted, nipped in the bud by the work's high degree of abstraction and fairly muted palette. The resultant ambiguity sets up a series of tensions that contribute to the construction of a potent visual metaphor conveying the layered complexity and revolutionary role of the protagonist of the portrait.

Focusing on the decidedly less purist side of this 1960s vision of the Baroque, as compared to the claims implicitly put forward by the cinema of Straub and Huillet, Frantz invites us to reconsider the transgressive jolt Wendy/Walter Carlos administered to the staid sensorium of the classical music world at the time as a contemporary template through which one can read his own pictorial approach: the chromatic vividness and drama of separation and reunion, the forms laid down and superimposed on the canvas at different angles, the dislocations and reverberations enacted by distinct tonal fields, the exiting and re-entrant lines, and the modulated and variable striping can all be interpreted as compelling evidence of this.

This modality also justifies a reading of his work as synthetic—a description that applies in equal measure to its abstract/figurative dynamic and its genealogical aspect. A case in point is the way in which the pictures evoke the neat compartmentalization of hard-edge Modernism only to violate this aesthetic at key points, undermining any notion of fixed composition while embodying a certain freedom that ends up being identified with the ultimate purposes of painting as such.

Frantz's approach is therefore the opposite of what John Ruskin called "fatal newness." In this respect Frantz is happy to paint in Ruskin's shadow, as his newness is utterly genuine, never put-on, and almost disconcertingly confident in the powers that the medium has placed at his disposal. Yet he never crosses the line into sheer identification with the mental object of pure abstraction or any of its antitheses.

Certain of the pictures, for instance *Morning After* (Kolbe) (2019), seem to embody a straightforward dialectic of illusionism and formal distortion, untouched by any secondary concerns or overlaid narratives. Even the main point

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of reference to an emblematic instance of modern sculpture in its familiar Barcelona Pavilion setting is handled so directly and so elegantly that it does not upstage or distract from the visual directness of the pictorial statement.

And even when an unequivocal architectonic reference is put forward, as in Köln → NY Connection, in which the graphic/gestural modality of the calligraphic flourish seems to be emancipated from any conventional signification, not only is the shadow of the spires of Cologne Cathedral visible beneath the sinuous, gestural line, but a salutary tension between abstraction and figuration is retained and even reinforced, precisely because of the evocation of this shadow. Architecture, which could under other circumstances threaten to overwhelm the pictorial field by subsuming its visuality under a constructive reference, is here made to augment an ambivalence specific to painting.

What is at stake when two antithetical systems collide, the first measured and open to infinite extension, the second chromatically saturated and discrete, finite in its mode of visual enunciation? One plausible response is contained in *Lady in the Radiator* (2019), which carries with it a complex semiotic function implicit in the cinematic dimension of referentiality—the title refers to a ghostly, cloying figure in David Lynch's 1977 film *Eraserhead*—to fuse with, or become inseparable from, its musical/aural parallelisms and the synesthetic dimension that implies. For this picture is inspired by one of the weirdest moments in David Lynch's incomparably bizarre film, and more precisely by the sounds associated with the film as a whole. It is endowed with a disconcerting industrial soundtrack, like a nonstop grinding of rusty gears, with shrill aftereffects, here transposed into brighter, yet no less potent visual terms.

This most ambitious, and by far Frantz's largest, painting exhibited to date, *Lady in the Radiator*—as much a haunted allegory of domestic space with cult cinema overtones as a musical score whose constituent signs are subject to a conspicuous process of disruption—initially appears arbitrary but reveals itself to be a radical rewriting of an entire notational system. It seems at first as if the notational condition is given to our vision as the simple ground for the figures of the musical signs of the notes, forming harmony and melody. But further scrutiny reveals that in connection with the painting-notation dialectic the artist ends up following a more oblique and discontinuous path.

Whether analogous to a musical score or not, the most evident manifestation of the idea of the collision of antithetical notational systems is found in the fact that not only are the chromatic elements intimately bound up with an uneven white and black set of lines, but that there is a symmetrical order of concepts, if not entirely of visuality, at work here. The large colored patch that dominates the visual field is divided into two vertically articulated regions endowed with equal visual weight—black at the top, teal at the bottom—and it is the color-negating top half that sends out more or less horizontal lines of black and blue that disturb the vertical lines of the striping around it. If one had to envision a kind of electrified pictorial energy, this is would be one way to do it: both lines snake continuously across the field, animated from within by black or licorice-gray smaller lines that form an equally sinuous core. White paint drips in an interpolated, partly determined, partly arbitrary pattern, giving rise to the paradox, extremely rare in the history of modern art, of a white shadow effect—not unknown, perhaps, in certain passages of Francis Bacon, yet here much flatter, much franker, and in some way more innocent to the eye, than when they limn a screaming Baroque pope.

These lines are in turn distinguished by a visible difference of facture: the left one drips white from its underside, exceeding its physical as well as its self-imposed conventional limits, exemplifying the effect of gravity on painting in the most unavoidably physical terms, while the other is a clean line in which color stays neatly within its boundaries. In passages such as these Frantz succeeds in actualizing the potentials of color-as-line, or linearized color, in uniquely heightened fashion.

In this way as well a local semiotics of color yields important clues about how to read the pictorial field, framing its re-formalization and resignification not only of its own set of conventions but of the histories of painting that are implicit in it. Frantz is acutely aware that it is necessary to show these relationships at work in their specific linear, chromatic, and referential/semiotic domains—to expose their modes of operation and interchange by drawing in the eye through the simultaneous exposure of such modes.

One might even say that this exposure is the actual subject of his painting, at least in its most recent iterations. That does not mean forestalling or in any way undercutting illusion, even and especially within an overall context of abstraction (with hints of mimetic reference to be sure, as in the vertical element in *Morning After* (Kolbe), which

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complicates the matter further in that it is an instance of art not as a nonartistic referent, but as a paradigmatic work of modern architecture: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's and Lilly Reich's aforementioned Barcelona Pavilion of 1929.)

Quite the opposite: a sense of illusion ends up being reinforced by the entry of a second-order evocation of a famous work of art and its original site in an even more conspicuous emblem of modern architecture, utilized as inner framing device, whose presence is only hinted at and that compensates in a sense for the lack of any actual frame around the image. Here we confront an instance of the thematization of the material support that is inherited from the expanded field condition, making its presence felt through a dialogue with architecture—an art that has no frame or paragon in the pictorial sense—which serves as sort of internal frame for his artistic enterprise because it is pressed into the service of the pictorial medium. This move is part of the very deliberate aesthetic of Frantz's painting, which leaves the observer in a state of curiosity about its facture—a curiosity that can only be partly satisfied by scrutiny of the raw sides of the canvas itself.

In this respect as in others, Frantz's is an art not of either—or but of both—and. His fundamentally synthetic approach makes ample use of analytic modes even as it probes the spaces between previously airtight categories. It is significant that Frantz's new pictorial discoveries are occurring at the precise moment when the tide of the expanded field has to some extent receded, revealing islands of medium specificity that are not only changing the map of contemporary art but also proving to be sites of unexpectedly lush growths of artistic vitality. Like all new terrains, this one invites extensive exploration; yet like very few, the trip is well worth it.

Arguably further insight into the inner logic of the work can be gained by varying the metaphor—for even more aptly than this last figure of a journey into painting's interiority, or the artist's own idea of “switched-on” painting, perhaps there is no better way to sum up what Frantz has achieved so far than to recall a famous quip by Barnett Newman that still resonates as the ultimate put-down to those who, being overly theory-obsessed, end up reversing the priorities of theory and practice: “Aesthetics is for the artist as ornithology is for the birds.”¹ It is in this sense, without subscribing to any preformed aesthetic, searching and finding as he moves forward, that Frantz has taken flight. Yet unlike, say, Percy Bysshe Shelley's skylark, which rises from some exalted point into an even higher imperceptible ether, he pursues a trajectory that draws our attention by more tangible means, challenging but also enabling us to trace the rapid arc of his development from the ground of his painting up to and including its furthest limit.

1. John P. O'Neill, *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 25.

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