

David Renggli & Thomas Wachholz

Let's Get Lit

Exhibition: 6 November 2021 – 7 January 2022

Opening: 6 November 2021, 11-6 pm

“Let's Get Lit” is the second part of the double exhibition of new works by David Renggli (*1974, lives in Zurich) and Thomas Wachholz (*1984, lives in Cologne), organized in collaboration with Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles.

David Renggli's series of the *Desire Paintings* are already a priori inscribed with a poetic and humorous dimension by their location of the word 'desire' in the title. These are medium to large format paintings of silhouette-like silhouettes and geometric forms on wood, framed in an object frame and covered on their upper edge with a coarse-meshed jute net. The fibrous jute fabric is also painted, which results in an overlapping of the motifs on different image planes. The spacing of these and the transparency of the coarse-meshed jute netting create an interesting optical effect as soon as the viewer moves in front of the work.

The artist detaches himself from the usually assumed relatively static way of looking at a painting and a processual moment is inscribed in it with the reception. Depending on the viewing angle, new visual experiences arise for the work. The artist thus dissolves the modernist dictum of the ideal (frontal) viewer location since both levels shift spatially against each other. The overlapping of the motifs creates new images and color effects. Renggli employs the aesthetics of decorative design and craftsmanship, which he fuses with references to geometric abstraction. In doing so, he challenges the tradition and authority of abstract painting, which was adopted very early into the decorative canon of interior design.

The usually two-dimensional layout of a painting is extended by another plane, resulting in an impression reminiscent of a hybrid between painting and relief. In addition, the coarse-meshed jute fabric acts like a kind of burning glass, seeming to dissolve the color that supports it like a grid while at the same time revealing a view of the colored forms beneath.

In a figurative sense, Renggli's works make use of the most diverse clichés of longing. His motifs spring from common stereotypes of (art) fantasies, notions of the idyllic and (tourist) places of longing. He breaks them up into their individual parts, reassembles them to let new, abstract images of aspiration emerge in the spaces thus created.

The appropriation and reinterpretation of everyday and art-historically traditional visual languages can also be found in Thomas Wachholz's work.

Matchboxes are a dying relic from a time when smoking in public and especially in cafes, restaurants, and bars was still unrestricted and consequently much more widespread than it is today.

The ephemeral matchbox very quickly developed into a form of free souvenir that, charged with individual memory, still connects the owner years later with the personal visit experience coupled to space and time. Over the decades, a discipline related to the collection of matchboxes developed in the form of phillumeny.

This background opens up both a starting point and a frame of reference for the series of works on view in which Thomas Wachholz deals with the cultural artifact of the matchbox on both a conceptual and painterly level.

In the early phase of the series, the artist focused primarily on participatory and processual elements. For several years, however, painting itself has become increasingly important. Starting from his matchbox collection, the artist deals with the found pictorial and color worlds as well as their compositions. In doing so, he develops them further to a point where they become independent of the original designs and turn into independent painterly subjects. A new, abstract repertoire of colors and forms emerges in the process, which the artist repeatedly samples and condenses into new compositions.

The artist breaks down the motif of the matchbox into its essential components: A square or transverse rectangular shape (the box), a motif on it (the label), and a monochromatic – occasionally honeycomb or diamond-patterned – russet bar (the striker). Only through the functional striker does the overall composition become a universal matchbox form that is recognizable to the viewer. Over the years, the striker has detached itself from the block-like design feature located next to the motif in order to mix with the pictorial elements in the new works and take on its own geometric-abstract forms. In doing so, over time, they have become increasingly detached from any mimetic moments and function merely as “echoes of modernist abstraction” (Wachholz). Nevertheless, the artist continues with ‘classical’ matchbox-like paintings as well.

Since 2020, the paintings now feature matches themselves. Similarly, as previously described for the boxes, the artist has reduced them to their essential graphic components: white lines end at one end with an oval, colored dot and thus become immediately recognizable as an image of a match. In the motivic repetition in some of the paintings themselves, they recall a box opened upside down, its matches scattered on the floor. The striker breaks away from its original blocky shape and transforms into a square net that seems to float above the canvas.