

LAWS OF IMITATION

In order to draw or paint human bodies as realistic as possible, a simple guideline is to avoid symmetry. Two equally wide sides to a face, two body parts with parallel lines—that is all it takes to strip the model of their physical idiosyncrasies. The reason is that actual bodies rarely exist in such tensed and geometrical postures—they move and bend, gesture and distort in perspective. Therefore, it appears that symmetrical bodies aren't based in material reality, but in a generalized idea of the human shape. One could claim that life permeates in the deviation of symmetry. However, symmetrical bodies are not necessarily failed representations of subjectivity, but attempts of abstraction. When bodies are depicted emptied of their physical and psychological individuality, what remains are archetypical figures, and human beings as building blocks of society.



THE POLITICS OF VISION

In her essay *Seurat's La Grande Jatte: An Anti-Utopian Allegory*, Linda Nochlin claims that George Seurat's *Sunday on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (1884–1886) is an anti-utopian painting, much unlike its post-impressionistic zeitgeist engaged in anarchist theories and social utopian ideas. This is due to the fact that Seurat's figures are stiff, schematic and lifeless, and yet dressed in contemporary fashion indicating social hierarchies, which is placing them precisely into their time. In their rigidity and mutual mimics, Seurat's figures offer no illusion, solace or redemption. *La Grande Jatte* is cold and political: it is depicting the petit bourgeois ennui on a leisurely day in early capitalism, as opposed to an atemporal mythological tale, or the plight of a singular person. The non-individual human figure has no choice but to be a signifier in a larger network of social politics.



PRIMARY DATA

Applying similar properties, Austrian philosopher Otto Neurath created the Isotype system, the predecessor of contemporary infographics. Isotype symbols were pictograms, used to represent social facts, deployed in order to be accessible to broad masses, including, at the time, a significant portion of illiterates. The simplified figures, usually in one block of color, corresponded in numbers to various statistical data. Their flatness and directness rendered them information, rather than representations. They implied democracy, a lack of hierarchy, a pattern—all things modern paintings seldomly implied.



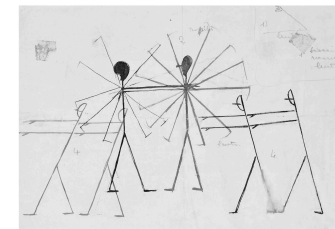
A WHITE WALL IN A MIRROR

Abstracted bodies were able to speak about generalized societies. Abstracted paintings are more akin to mirrors than to windows. In his series *White Paintings*, Robert Rauschenberg created white canvases painted with wall paint, devoid of any personal stroke. The total reduction of image was however not immune to dust, or the external changes of light, which effectively became the content of the works. However, to see those, the viewer had to slow down and observe. Solely visually speaking, every monochrome wants us to stare into nothing, which is always a bit like staring backwards into our skulls.



ITERATIONS

Matthias Noggler's paintings question the act of seeing. His figures are frontal, yet they are painted in a velvety blue color—as if by night itself, rendering their forms barely intelligible. They stand in formations, on provisional stages, arms linked—either confronting the viewer or turning their backs to them. They appear trapped within the frames, blurring into their surroundings, their bodies contorted to fit and pose. However, their stiffness and resoluteness have an activating quality, as if calling out the status quo of passive viewing. Noggler's work has long been characterized by the appropriation of various historical references and painterly styles. In *Iterations*, the canvases are loaded with the knowledge about the failed potential of modernist political painting. In that fashion, Noggler's figures demand attention and action, however, due to their reduced visibility, those very acts are hindered. The resulting works are abstracted images, which no longer hold hope for grand actions, but attempt to hold the viewer in an unresolved tension of perceiving.



— Julija Zaharijević

Iterations is Matthias Noggler's inaugural solo exhibition with the gallery and the artist's first exhibition in Germany. It comprises of a new body of gouache paintings on canvas and a small set of paper collages.

Matthias Noggler (b. 1990, Innsbruck, Austria) lives and works in Berlin. He graduated in 2016 from the class of Julian Göthe at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. Recent exhibitions and contributions took place at Layr, Vienna (2022, 2021 solo); Ferdinandeum, Innsbruck; Wunder-Bar, Vienna; Universitätsgalerie im Heiligenkreuzerhof, University of Applied Arts, Vienna (all 2022); Belvedere 21, Vienna (2021); Callirrhoë, Athens (2020), a.o. His works are included in the public collections of the Republic of Austria; City of Innsbruck; County of Tirol; Klocker Foundation, Tirol; Lentos Kunstmuseum, Linz; Landesgalerie, Linz; Wien Museum, Vienna; Print Room at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna; Belvedere 21, Vienna, a.o.