

Review Art Press (2014) by Anne Malherbe  
**Paul Pagk, Vivacity of Abstraction**

The time is not much for abstraction. The art scene, in France at least, is buzzing with a whole generation of artists doing very narrative painting. How can one, without appearing to be out of line and without boring the amateurs, still exhibit a painting that positions itself as heir to geometric abstraction and American minimal art? This is what the Eric Dupont gallery is showing, with an exhibition of recent paintings by the New York artist (born in London) Paul Pagk. The Eric Dupont Gallery has been faithfully and regularly presenting the artist's work since it opened in the early nineties.

Paul Pagk's painting is not figurative. However, it is not frozen, nor mute. On the large square formats with bright colors, lines find their balance. They evoke an architectural plan, mechanical forms, piping. They are a sign towards something known, all in discretion and refinement. But they do not go completely there, and they leave us to our imagination.

It is a painting that gives itself slowly: it is neither collected, nor direct. Under the surface, other layers live on, contributing to the enigmatic aspect of the works. One feels that there is a thickness of matter and a density of meaning, on which the final passage of paint comes to put like a veil on. The touch looks smooth, impeccable and polished. But it is not so, because the hand is present, although discreet, in search of the perfection within the imperfect. The drawings that the artist makes elsewhere, and which are not preparations for the paintings, seem much more acerbic and jagged. They reveal, one would say, what is happening under the flamboyant passage of color. They show a vigor, almost violent, that the painting channels and transforms. In the paintings, it is the color, brilliant and of a perfect elegance, which condenses all the intensity of the compositions. As a child, I could look at palettes of Venilia samples for hours: each colored square let me believe that there was something like an extremely desirable absolute of color. Paul Pagk's paintings allowed me to touch this absolute.

The artist makes his own colors, with oil and pigments. This process adds to the patience of the execution of each painting, some of which took up to two years. As the title of the exhibition currently on view in New York expresses, it is a path that is made in the material, layer after layer, and which is equivalent to a rise in power. The result is all power, first contained and then bursting out and diffusing into the color.

Abstract painting, at least Paul Pagk's one, is nothing less than a variation on forms and colors, but a living energy that rises in the pictorial matter, and becomes color, light, balance, carnal density, pleasure of the texture. It has all its place in the current vivacity of the pictorial research.

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