

Günther Förg

(Füssen, Germany, 1952 – Fribourg, 2013)

Förg's first paintings, in the early 1970s, seem like meditations on modern abstract art. They are monochromes, mostly grays and blacks, executed with a painter's roller. This pictorial practice led critics to see similarities with certain earlier exponents of American abstract painting, such as Newman, Ryman, Stella and Marden, and an approach consistent with that of Gerhard Richter during the same period.

In the 1980s Förg began to develop painting in dialogue with the surface of the support, using metal sheets in place of canvas, so that the paint would not be absorbed, but instead would be reflected in the space.

The two works in the collection, both *Untitled*, 2006, are examples of his more recent pictorial investigations. Instead of monochrome treatment there is a grid-like compositional scheme, which apparently evokes another principal device of modernist painting. Förg's grids, however, have little in common with the tradition of Mondrian. They do not seem to aspire to the absoluteness of orthogonal and Cartesian structure, but rather are a personal way to extend the painted surfaces on the canvas and to construct screens of light at different depths. Instead of the precision of line typical of earlier abstraction, the artist employs the expressive and at times expressionistic device of swiftly drawn interwoven lines, with brushstrokes that recall the free crosshatch pencil technique of shading in sketches. But these reticulated partitions of shadow and color compose paintings of vivid light. These paintings are more fragile, light, and abbreviated than those of Dorazio, for example, but not that different, as it is not unlikely that both artists share an inheritance of the chromatic and luminarist values of the Impressionist tradition. Rudi Fuchs has written: "Förg uses the idiom of geometric abstraction with the same naturalness with which the late Monet used the lilies in his garden pond: material and forms that happen to be at hand, easily available as the vehicle for aesthetic sensibility, painterly style and vision. [...] [His] paintings (as well as the photographs) have an incredible, almost irresponsible lightness that one rarely finds in modern art." (*Günther Förg*, exhibition catalogue, Fuchs, R., ed., Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1995). (EV)