

PHILIPPE VAN SNICK / SYMMETRISCHE-ASSYMMETRISCHE REEKS OP PANEEL
ARTISSIMA / BACK TO THE FUTURE / BOOTH GREY N°2
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On Philippe Van Snick's Symmetrische - Asymmetrische reeks op paneel and a Bit More

The methodological procedure by which Philippe Van Snick executed *Symmetrische - Asymmetrische reeks op paneel* (Symmetric - Asymmetric series on panel) (1988-1989) is not immediately visible. At first glance, the series can be seen as an irregular scattering of monochromatic quadrangles painted on identical wooden panels, each of which a square, 152 × 152 cm. By partially blurring his method, Van Snick signals us, the viewers, that experiencing his work, and as a consequence the world, means to decipher, to decode the encrypted rules upon which its operation is based. He signals us that everything has a method, a context to be discovered. The series conducts us to think in terms of the rule (the repeated, the persistent), the exception (the different, the changeable), and the exchange between them.

Symmetrische - Asymmetrische reeks op paneel is a group of ten pairs of paintings. Each pair refers to one of the ten colors Van Snick's work is restricted to—red, yellow, blue, orange, green, violet, white, black, gold, and silver. At the bottom of one panel in each of the ten pairs, Van Snick symmetrically placed two rectangular elements of the same size and shape—a black one representing the 'night', and a light blue one representing the 'day'—accompanied by two additional, non-identical geometric elements of a third color, scattered irregularly. On the second panel in each pair, the elements representing night and day appear in different, non-identical size and shape, and are scattered asymmetrically, accompanied by two additional, non-identical elements of the other third color.

Codifying the black and light blue elements as signifiers of night and day turns each one of the pairs that the series is comprised of, as well as the series as a whole, into a sort of galactic representation, a changing configuration of celestial constellations. In this sense, the colored geometric elements are perceivable as celestial bodies spinning and rotating in outer-space, seemingly jumping out of the bare wooden plate upon which they are painted, as if, rather than quadrangular geometric elements, they are spherical bodies moving back and forth, inside and outside the pictorial and actual space. The real wall-space between the two panels in each pair integrates the viewer within this movement, enables him or her to become an unfixed wandering gaze that simultaneously inhabits multiple points of view. A similar kind of free floating movement of painterly elements is also found in Van Snick's series of works entitled *Monochromes Destabilisés-re* (*Monochromes Destabilized-re*) (1980), where his experiments in site-specific painterly interventions transformed the given architectural spaces in which they were implemented into a dynamic, real-time event of boundless expansion.

The black element representing the night resonates a lunar eclipse during which the moon passes behind the earth's shadow. In this

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line of thought, the black element functions as the shadow of the light blue element representing the day (or the earth), and as the moon which lies behind and is obscured by it. Van Snick's interest in eclipse forms stretches back to 1977, when his studies in the morphology of the ellipse throughout the 1970's evolved into and began to be associated with varied stages of lunar eclipses that these ellipses were able to denote. The arrival to the eclipse from the ellipse is also the discovery of the word ellipse in the word eclipse. It is a formal-pictorial evolution, which also involves language.

Van Snick's mode of painterly abstraction as practiced in *Symmetrische - Asymmetrische reeks op paneel*, insists on concreteness, i.e., it is indifferent to the distinction between the representational and the non-representational, the subjective and the objective. It is both abstract and representational since it is an abstracted representation of things which are in themselves abstract (such as celestial constellations). Although they avow the transcendent, the out-worldly, Van Snick's painterly elements resist transcendental¹, non-empirical concepts. They are always dependent on and are an outcome of a concrete experience, reference, object, encounter, and method, culminating into a particular, existential stance in the world, a particular observational and receptive activity.

Ory Dessau

¹ In Kantian philosophy, a transcendental argument is an a priori presupposition conditioning and validating all human experiences as such.

Philippe Van Snick (1946, BE) lives & works in Brussels (BE). His work is in the museum collections of MoMA, New York (US), Mu.ZEE, Ostend (BE), M HKA, Antwerp (BE), S.M.A.K., Ghent (BE) and various private & corporate collections in Europe, USA and Latin-America. Van Snick received solo exhibitions at amongst others: Museum of Modern Art Rio de Janeiro (BR), De Hallen Haarlem (NL), Grazer Kunstverein (AU), Museum M Leuven (BE), S.M.A.K., Ghent (BE), BOZAR, Brussels (BE), Art Gallery of York University, Toronto (CA) Nuno Centeno, Porto (PT), Arcade, London (UK). Recent group exhibitions include: *The Corner Show*, cur. Wouter Davidts, Phillip Metten and Mihnea Mircan, Extra City, Antwerp (BE); *Conversation Piece*, Mu.ZEE, Ostend (BE); *Re: Painted*, *Schilderijen uit de collectie*, S.M.A.K., Ghent (BE); *Philippe Van Snick & June Crespo, P!*, New York (USA); *Esta puerto pide clavo*, cur. RIVET (Sarah Demeuse & Manuela Moscoso), Tatjana Pieters, Ghent (BE); *1979 A Momentum to Radical Instants*, cur. Carles Guerra, La Virreina, Barcelona (ES).

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