

CONRADI

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Suse Bauer

Suse Bauer evolves an abstraction of ornate constructivism. This may seem a contradiction, given that constructivist approaches pursue a formal logic of the image, one that does not dwell on the decorative. With her work, however, Bauer moves directly into this contradiction. In often small, though sometimes very large, formats, she combines color fields, lines, and abstract figures in two-dimensional compositions that are as archaic as they are artificial. One might think of modern as well as abstract, utopian public art as it once flourished in East Germany (where the artist lived as a child).

Bauer takes on such associations with the titles of her work, such as *Erste Verkündung der symbolhaften Anleitung zur Gestaltung der Welt* (First Proclamation of the Symbolic Formula for the Design of the World) or *Die Ingenieurin* (The Engineer), both 2009. She makes no direct citations in her paintings, but instead gathers forms, colors, and concepts intuitively and assembles them in varied compositions. Mostly rendered in thick oil pencil on paper, the clearly contoured fields of sharply contrasted color seem homogenous at first, but on closer inspection the surfaces appear specifically articulated: Fine strokes reveal the arc of her pencil's movement, while monochrome surfaces incorporate multiple shades and produce a subtle vibration of hue.

Bauer creates patterns that emerge via a piecemeal method. *Alles was von mir Ich genannt wird* (All of Me That Is Called I), 2010, for instance, comprises just a few elements. Against an intense vermilion plane, a jagged bronze cross emphasizes the diagonal and separates a reverse-L-shaped angle on the left from two vertically converging circles on the right. Here, Bauer condenses a spare formal vocabulary into an image of the stylized, enigmatic sublime. *Jens Asthoff*

Translated from German by Diana Reese.

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