

GALERIE THOMAS MODERN

PETER HALLEY

SAW: A Suite of Four New Paintings

September 9 - November 5, 2016

To mark the opening of the season with OPEN art 2016, Galerie Thomas Modern is presenting the latest works by Peter Halley. Peter Halley calls the four large-format canvases "SAW" I – IV, "grid paintings", a technique he has used since 2014 to introduce a new formal component into his work.



SAW IV, 2016

In his work, Halley explores geometrical patterns, colours and surface structures, and their organisation, investigating the structures of modern technological constellations in communication systems, architectures, supply infrastructures and the like. In all his works, one can see the predominance of digitally determined layouts in frameworks and layers.

In his latest compositions, Halley focuses on rectangular colour fields without outlining structures, as in the "cells", "prisons" and "conduits" of his earlier works. These new pieces contain allusions to large-scale image pixels, thereby reflecting Halley's questioning of the organisation and construction of space, communication and its regulation; but they also deal with our ever more abstracted perception of reality via digital image fields of

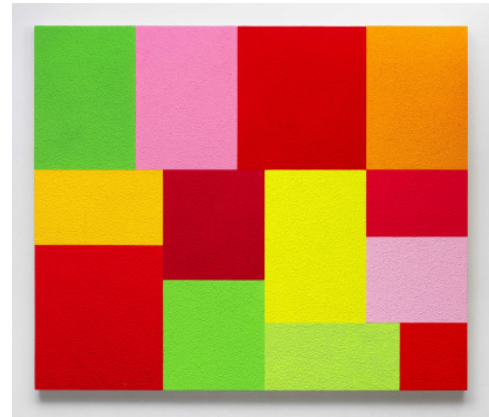
LED monitors, computer screens and the ubiquitous touchscreens of mobile phones, tablets or navigation systems.

Peter Halley's "grid paintings" appear to give a self-contradictory commentary on the rivalry between the digital and analogue image, thus also alluding to a chronological structure – where the completely ephemeral, transient digital image is concerned. It remains unclear whether the paintings depict a detail in the time sequence or colour combination, as in the extreme enlargement of a digital representation, or selection by chance that forces the observer to take a particular point of view. At the same time, the apparent, extremely enlarged "pixels" have been transformed into actual, entirely analogue, materially tangible colour surfaces.

As though to reinforce this contrast, Peter Halley gives the colour surfaces a relief-like, haptic surface, thereby contradicting even more strongly the character of the actually incorporeal digital pixels, which are merely appearance and can only provide a colour, an image, a representation – i.e. more complex information – when combined in their thousands. Even if the strict rules of composition are clearly visible, Peter Halley in this way shows how the hierarchy of information influences the rules of perception.

In these highly minimalistic but large-scale grids, the clearly delimited colour surfaces remain without information content or symbolic meaning. Initially, the colour contrasts are the only information, whereas the composition is contingent in its effect and the underlying order pattern or arrangement scheme is not deducible. Nevertheless, the question arises as to whether the sequence and the size ratio of the surfaces to one another don't contain a code after all. Here, Halley emphasises the importance and role of geometry: is it a pattern underlying the world, an unveiling of the most secret systems of order, or a rigid explanation schema, devised by man and opposed to the organic?

The contrast between the coldness of the mathematics, the geometry and the warmth of the colour, of the sensual perception, leads us to the core of Halley's artistic criticism of the limitations of systematic measurement and classification of the world. At the same time, he thereby addresses one of the oldest aesthetic theories – that the sense of beauty is determined by proportions. In the history of art, there have been many diverse, exhaustive efforts to fathom the mathematical rules of beauty – one only needs to remember Leonardo's Vitruvian Man and the importance of the golden ratio.



SAW II, 2016

In these new works, Halley departs one step further from the architectonic principle that dominates his "prison paintings", towards a pure geometrical abstract composition, which he spectacularly and, in contrast to all earlier artistic movements of Geometrical Abstraction, Abstract Impressionism, Pop Art or Minimal Art, disengages from the non-figurative, and connects directly to the reality of the living world.

About the artist



Peter Halley first came to prominence in the mid-1980s with his diagrammatic representations, his geometrically alienated *cells* and *prisons* in strong, fluorescent colours. Since the 1990s, Halley created site-specific installations, in which he integrated his images into large digital prints that covered entire walls.

From 1996 to 2005, Halley published *index magazine*, focusing on interviews with countless artistic personalities. In 2001, he received the Frank Jewett Mather Award from the renowned College Art Association for his art criticism. From 2002 to 2011, he was Director of Graduate Studies in Painting and Printmaking at Yale. The latest exhibitions with works by Peter Halley were the opening exhibition "America is Hard to See" at the Whitney Museum of

American Art, a one-person exhibition at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art and, currently, his large installation in the rotunda of the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt am Main.

Galerie Thomas Modern exclusively represents Peter Halley in Germany and has presented his works in a number of one-person and group exhibitions, most recently with a large wall installation at Art Basel Unlimited 2016.

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Modern & Contemporary

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