

Exciting the Eye: Elisabeth Plank and Moritz Mizrahi

(Nina Schedlmayer)

At first glance, the paintings of Elisabeth Plank and Moritz Mizrahi seem to have little in common, apart from their abstract visual language. Plank's neon-colored compositions appear like a counterpoint to Mizrahi's murals, embroideries and canvases, executed primarily in shades of gray. On closer inspection, however, a striking parallel can be drawn: the elements in their pictures seem to be poised in extreme dynamics to each other. While geometric figures meander across the pictorial plane in Mizrahi's works, the forms drift over the surface as lively streams of color in Plank's paintings. With regard to art history, the works of the two artists are connected to the classics of Op art and Minimalism and open up confusing spatial situations.

Moritz Mizrahi, a busy street artist, works mainly outdoors. His medium, he says, is the wall. The large in-situ painting in the last room of the gallery, a floating conglomerate of cubes, plays with changing spatial effects. It is flanked by a sculpture, a field of diagonally arranged small cubes that visitors can rearrange as they wish – it is somewhat reminiscent of a board game. In their fine handiness, the small, exquisitely sealed objects bring to mind construction set pieces or Japanese netsuke, which are also intended to be weighed and viewed in one's hand. In addition, Mizrahi experiments with other media, such as textiles, on which he depicts his geometric figures as well as on randomly found icons. He pursues yet another path with his calligraphically oriented paintings. Although the works initially appear to be written images, it soon becomes clear that their forms do not convey any linguistic content but are ornaments that form vibrating pictures.

At this point, a parallel to Elisabeth Plank's paintings can be observed. In some of her compositions, too, such vibrations are found – small elements that get caught in a whirlpool. In some of the works of her *Shapes* series, which she has

been consistently developing since 2016, amoeba-like creatures merge into swarms; they are somewhat reminiscent of Hans Arp's organic forms, albeit multiplied. In their special coloration and texture, created by the fine, glazed application of paint, they stand out strongly against the flat, black background. Although Plank creates the dynamics in these compositions primarily through the rotation of the elements, in the next step she does it through a contrasting colorfulness, applying neon yellow, orange, pink and blue with an airbrush. This virtually makes the compositions shimmer, exciting the eye also physically, always supported by momentum, an oscillating of the lines. "I formulate from the center," says the artist. In doing so, she knows how to use her means in a well-dosed and targeted way: only in combination with more subdued colors do the luminous tones develop their dynamic effect. Plank masters the interplay between background and space, volume and flatness in a virtuoso manner. In this way, both artistic positions show the painterly means with which dynamics can be created – and broken up again to a certain extent.