

Udo Nöger

The Inside of Light

Nöger's singular practice is predicated on the use of ambient light, which he harnesses and reworks to create his ethereal, monochromatic mixed-media artworks. In his quest for nuanced artistic results that upend traditional approaches to art-making, he spotlights light as a medium in and of itself.

All artists work with light in one way or another; color and light, for instance, are inextricably linked. Painters rely on the subtractive model of color mixing, in which the color of a particular paint pigment is determined by which visible light wavelengths it absorbs and which it reflects. Other artists, such as those who make light art, manage an additive model in which lights of various wavelengths can be combined to produce a particular color outcome. In the first model, the mixing of all available pigments creates black, while in the second, combining the full spectrum of light wavelengths creates white.

Nöger works in a hybrid mode, moving beyond the surface of a work to create what can be likened to shallow light boxes containing systems of transparent layers that he manipulates using various media and techniques. Ambient light filters through their surfaces, illuminating their interiors and bouncing between the internal components before being reflected back out. Although the works contain no artificial light sources, they appear to emit light. This delicate luminescence is impacted by the particular quality of ambient lighting (determined, for example, by time of day or type of artificial lighting) that a work is exposed to. Thus, despite their palettes of whites and grays, the works can also conjure faint blues, purples, peaches, and greens.

The compositions are highly minimalistic so as to underscore this focus on light. Nöger has said that he works toward "a point where there is no more, no less," eliminating visual noise to achieve a balance and simplicity that draw the eye and the mind deeper. Because of their tonal qualities and minimalist aesthetic, the works are somewhat reminiscent of paintings by Robert Ryman or Agnes Martin. And yet, Nöger does not work on the surfaces of a canvas, filling it with colors and shapes as artists traditionally do. Instead, his art features organic and occasionally biomorphic circular shapes, as in *Sinnlos 3* (2017), or softly curving linear markings, as in *Grosse Landschaft 3* (2016), that are created from within. These tubular forms often bisect, though not necessarily on the same plane, distinct visual fields distinguished by either scraped white underpainting or a diaphanous effect that hints at depth and a space beyond. In this way, the works more closely align with installations by Larry Bell and Robert Irwin that use reflection and refraction to create luminous yet sensual and atmospheric environments. For Nöger, light gives way to physical sensation in a way other media cannot; though the interiors of the works cannot be touched, they project a sensory experience that the viewer can nevertheless feel.

DOLBY CHADWICK GALLERY

Udo Nöger was born in 1961 in Enger/Westfalen, Germany. He has lived and traveled all over the world and currently maintains studios in San Diego, Miami, and Geneva, Switzerland. Nöger has exhibited extensively across the United States, Europe, and Asia, and his art can be found in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, and Haus der Kunst in Munich, among others. This will be his second exhibition with the Dolby Chadwick Gallery.