

Thomas Müller: Drawings

November 17, 2012, to January 11, 2013



Untitled, 2012. Pencil and acrylic paint on paper, 29.7 x 21 cm.



Untitled, 2012. Pencil, chalk, ink, and acrylic paint on paper, 29.7 x 21 cm.



Untitled, 2011. Ballpoint pen on paper, 29.7 x 21 cm.

Already as a student in Stuttgart, Thomas Müller was extensively involved in the medium of drawing. Painting, to which he no longer devotes himself today, also occupied an important place for the artist for a long time. In his drawings one can still see its influences: the use of oil and acrylic paint alongside pencil, ballpoint pen, chalk, ink, and colored pencils.

If one asks the artist Thomas Müller himself where drawing begins, he expresses himself as follows:

Drawing begins when we point to something, emphasize something, make distinctions. We separate it from the rest. The marking remains in the tension with the blank space of the surface: there the unmarked, unmeasured continuum of the ground; here the signs, the energy of the line that activates the ground.¹

In order to produce this tension between the *blank space of the surface* and the *signs*, Müller often uses only a few lines, sometimes drawn with pencil, sometimes with a colored pencil or ballpoint pen, perhaps combined with planes of ink or acrylic paint. The blank space is never just a background that serves as a presentation space for what

¹ Thomas Müller, in *Draw: Hefte zur zeitgenössischen Zeichnung*, ed. Nora Schattauer (Berlin: Revolver, 2012).

is drawn but is rather itself part of the work. The tension between the paper void and what the artist draws on the sheet is palpable for the viewer. Relationships seem to form between the planes resulting from the lines and the elements placed on the paper. Müller causes entire stories, if not poetry, to emerge on the sheet of paper. Every work thus offers an invitation to contemplate it. Further levels of absorption open up when the artist hangs several of his drawings next to, above, or below one another, sometimes with empty spaces between them. The works enter into a dialogue with one another, pointing beyond their own edges, in a sense. In most cases, these combinatorial hangings are variable, which leads to an almost inexhaustible store of different experiences of meaning.

In contrast with the often minimalist and reductive works already described, there are drawings whose many curved or snail-like lines point to chaos. In general, antitheses are important to Müller's creativity: empty next to full, simple next to complex, black-and-white next to color, figurative next to abstract. With the last of these, the artist would certainly want to add something. The question whether his drawings are abstract, despite having figurative elements, comes up repeatedly in the literature. Müller points out that there is no contradiction between the real and the abstract, since our reality is abstract and something abstract can also be a real experience.² The distinction between abstract and real need not be made in Müller's case; the two terms resolve each other or, perhaps more precisely expressed, form a harmonious symbiosis.

In the exhibition at the Galerie Wenger the A4-format drawings that Müller has called "*the heart of my work*"³ can be seen alongside several larger-format works.

Works by Thomas Müller are found in numerous museums and private collections, for example, the Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris; the Hamburger Kunsthalle; the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Brunswick; the Kunstmuseum Bonn; the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart; the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett; the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich; the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Neuchâtel; the Collection Guerlain; the Ege Kunst- und Kulturstiftung, Freiburg im Breisgau; and the Maxine and Stuart Frankel Foundation in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, USA. His works have been shown at the Drawing Center, New York; at the Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas; and at the Centre for Recent Drawing, London, among other places. Recently his works could be seen in Montevideo and Mexico City as part of the exhibition *Linie, Line, Linea: Contemporary Drawing*.

² Cf. Thomas Müller, in *Thomas Müller: Touching, Relating, Dividing*, exh. cat. (London: Centre for Recent Drawing, 2011), 53.

³ Thomas Müller, in *ibid.*, 64.