

I. Painting

One important group of Steffen Schlichter's works can be perceived as paintings, even though there is nothing about this painting that would be painting in the traditional sense of the word: no inscription of the hand, no stroke, no expression, no color system, no palette, no composition, no

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priming, no application of paint. Everything that is the case is, on the one hand, industrially manufactured semi-finished products and materials: square particle boards (in four sizes: 15 × 15 cm, 30 × 30 cm, 60 × 60 cm, and 100 × 100 cm) and industrially manufactured tape, whose width, length, and materials are predetermined (and

along with the material, their color or colors or even their patterns—in the case of barrier tape, for example—are predetermined) and, on the other hand, simple material methods of application or rather taping: the tape is applied linearly without cuts or distortions, as material straight lines. From these extremely reduced, materially determined materials and conditions of those materials, Steffen Schlichter has created a series of different models, which are inevitably perceived as painting or like painting: pictorial grids, strictly regulated constellations of lines, always the same width and color, on a square plane.

The basic model of his methods was employed, for example, in the “paintings” known as the NY TAPES 2005: “The works of the series of NY TAPES used tape from New York City. The tape was applied to square particle boards, edge to edge first from top to bottom and then from left to right. Just one kind of tape is selected for each work. An area in the lower right corner of the particle board remains exposed. The size of this area depends on the width of the tape in relation to the size of the particle board.”<sup>1</sup> The dimensions of the industrial material are fixed, and so the width and color of the lines are determined by the material reality of the tape. But this directive is in turn subject to contingencies, variations, and deviations: the length of the rolls varies slightly, never being exactly the same; their width is subject to slight variations that result from inaccuracies when cutting the rolls; slight deviations result when applying the tape to the particle boards, and they accumulate as the same taping movement is repeated.

The materials, the requirements for them, and the methods used thus produce two kinds of contingency: a regulated contingency on the methodological level, which results from superimposing two different measuring systems that do not coincide: the format of the particle boards and the format (in particular the width) of the tape are not connected and do not

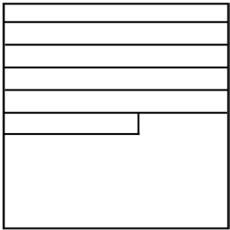
go together; repeatedly applying new sections of tape side by side inevitably leaves behind remnants, lacunae, blank areas. This is because the tape is as a matter of principle not cut along its width; if the whole width of the tape does not fit on the surface, it is not applied. Moreover, only entire rolls of tape or leftover rolls are used; the end of the rolls or “lines” is not decided on the basis of the composition.

A second contingency results from the preexisting material contingency or the imperfection of the materials; these “mistakes” are amplified by the iteration of the same method, by always repeating the same steps. “Concerning my current works [...] I would like to say briefly that they derive from the interplay of different quantities of information/material—the particle board as support and, for example, one roll of tape of a certain length and width—as well as a predefined method. So these are not works developed based on composition but rather the results of the ‘colliding’ of specific parameters and a conceptual action that is deliberately fraught with apparent ‘errors.’”<sup>2</sup>

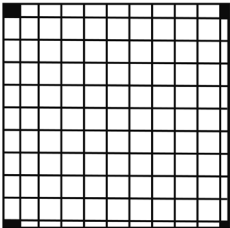
Schlichter has derived from this basic model (the first model) eight additional pictorial models, which become increasingly complex, especially in terms of their layering. The second one begins when a role of tape is not sufficient to cover the surface with the iteration of juxtaposed tape, when the tape ends somewhere on the surface, so that part of the surface remains free (uncovered) in a completely contingent and unpredictable way.

A related method works out from the central vertical and the central horizontal line (not from the top edge and the left edge). Here the square surface is always cut in half by the central vertical and the central horizontal line. If the tape is long enough, this results in the third case, in which the individual lines overlap, resulting in four almost identical blank squares at the four corners of the plane. When the tape is shorter, however, the fourth case results, in which there are uncovered rectangles on the plane as well. In these bisections, deviations and inaccuracies are permitted that increasingly disturb the symmetry of the plane. That is because such deviations recur as the method progresses: the plane is thus not subdivided in a strictly symmetrical way; instead, in a play of deviations and disturbances, its geometry becomes increasingly difficult to understand and its order increasingly inscrutable.

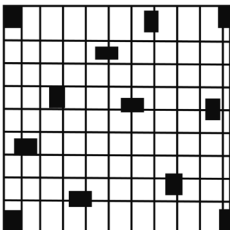
In a fifth step Schlichter no longer cuts off the tape at the back of the support (the particle board) but rather wraps it around the entire planar volume of the painting. Strictly speaking, the orthogonal edges of the support prescribe that the all the lengths of tape run parallel; in fact, however, slight shifts in the angle result, which with the iteration of the procedure multiply or accumulate, with effects that are vexing, that disturb or even destroy the order, or that remain incomprehensible; this is because the pieces of tape that do not remain parallel intersect one another and thus, first, form an irrational angle and, second, result in layering.



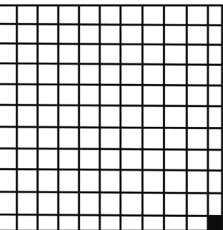
Method 2



Method 3

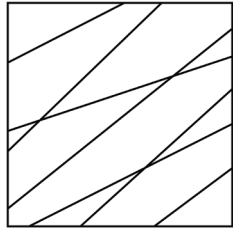


Method 4



Method 1

**In a play of deviations and disturbances, its geometry becomes increasingly difficult to understand.**



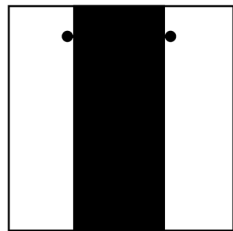
Method 5

The superimpositions of the material tape are perceived like linear overpainting; with such overpainting, however, the eye can no longer comprehend distinguishable, superimposed planes but rather sees only individual, local moments of the tape lines covering one another (Gerhard Richter's *Vermalungen* [Unpaintings] function analogously with an endless line, a continuous brushstroke). In material and haptic terms, this results in a relief of superimpositions; in pictorial and visual terms, however, there is no visible layering, not staggered depth; instead, there are only local disturbances, local concealments that result in a kind of visual thicket for the eye—a thicket whose depth remains immeasurable and is experienced therefore experienced only as thickness.

In the sixth case, when the tape is wrapped vertically around the pictorial volume, so that it does not cover the holes that have been drilled symmetrically into the back of the panel in order to hang it, this restriction to a plane that has been restricted vertically in two places does not have any apparent motivation when seen from the front. Only when both sides of

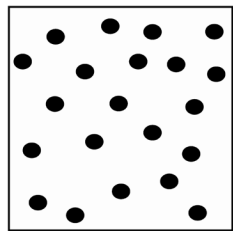
**Only when both sides of the panel, front and back, are seen as two equal sides of a flat, square object is it possible to understand this restricted plane, which is based not on the composition but on function.**

the panel, front and back, are seen as two equal sides of a flat, square object is it possible to understand this restricted plane, which is based not on the composition but on function. At the same time, however, the functional perception of a three-dimensional object repeatedly turns into the aesthetic perception of a picture plane—which is, after all, not even two-dimensional (it is a plane, not a surface), much less three dimensional.



Method 6

The grids of vertical and horizontal tape can also, seventh, be left out and be replaced by lines that can only be derived geometrically and are therefore deliberately implicit, not explicit. This invisible gird then determines the distribution of a specific number of adhesions points—determined, for example, by the retail packaging; this distribution quickly becomes so vague and incomprehensible that it can seem random; and indeed Steffen Schlichter in fact distributes these adhesions points on the surface arbitrarily.



Method 7

The works of the eighth group—the only one with a name: P. M. for Piet Mondrian—are related to that: the particle boards are rotated forty-five degrees and used as rectangular diamonds. Horizontal and vertical “lines” are taped to it, but they are not symmetrical to the two orthogonal axis (which have been left blank) but rather shifted in relation to them. This results in an undecided back and forth between functional and aesthetic perception: from functional perception that comprehends the disconnected objects with their specific contingencies and from aesthetic perception that sees the complex compositional connections and hence meaningful aesthetic relationships within the picture plane.

Many of the visual aspects of these “paintings” result from the materiality of the tape; it can be opaque to varying degrees, translucent, or reflective, which affects its optical depth and the visibility or legibility or its colo-

red layers; they can be thin and delicate, quasi-immaterial, or of massive, almost raw materiality; correspondingly, they can be perceived more like veils or layers of color or more like material objects. That is because the material, haptic-optic qualities of such tape are seen as purely visual qualities when the functional, comprehending gaze turns into the perception of the aesthetic context of a composed plane. Liberated in favor of a

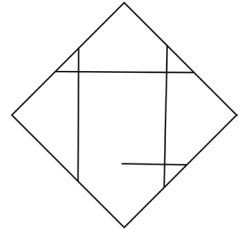
purely visual phenomenalism of their materiality, these material-haptic qualities enrich to a large degree the pictorial, purely visual sphere of different qualities of colors. The resulting visual presence of these lines is due, to a not insignificant degree, to the materiality of the tape. This sudden switching back and forth was called “facture” (*faktura*) by the Russian Constructivists and was carefully analyzed by them (especially by Vladimir Tatlin and Ivan Puni). Playing with the sudden shift from material object to visual appearance is very central to Schlichter's “paintings”: the painting is at once a volume with a back and material edges; paint is both a material application and hence a material layer, in this case a solid, glued material, a collage; the painting can thus also be used as a pseudo-functional horizontal plane (like a tablet).

The tape can have many colors or a pattern but cannot be monochrome. That is true of the ninth case, for example, Japanese ornamental ribbons of rice paper, which are sold as a collection of three different colors or patterns. When these tapes are applied, starting from the orthogonal cross of central vertical and horizontal lines, a seemingly deliberate, motivated, weblike patterns results. Even more confusingly, in many cases, the panels can no longer be grasped—in terms the rules by which they are formed, the methods, and the relationships between the layers—when Steffen Schlichter uses tape that has its own pattern. Because juxtaposition and superimposition of the same pattern, which is regular because of the method used by disturbed by the deviations, can no longer be comprehended, seemingly chaotic figures result—chaotic not in terms of their causality but for the eye, which seeks visual relationships—that are not strictly identical to one another, which are no longer repeating patterns but rather differ slightly from one another, deviating in microdifferences: a play of identity and deviation, repetition and similarity.

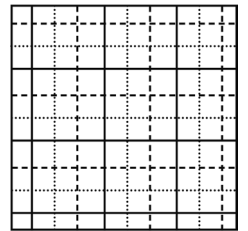
The method of the progressing halving of the planes (albeit disturbed by small deviations), starting out from the intersection at the center, is one of reflexive self-application. As in mathematical series that result from self-application—such as the Fibonacci series—these self-reflexive series produce self-similarity. They result only in the process and cannot be calculated in advance but are produced by the self-application itself. As with Mandelbrot series, this self-similarity permits an astonishing variation in size, with self-similarity across all dimensions.

The effects of layering and self-application do not result in Op Art (which depends on the mastery of optical effects) but rather in uncontrollable,

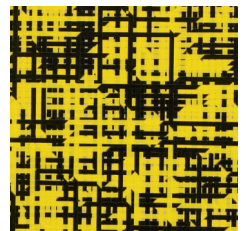
**This results in an undecided back and forth between functional and aesthetic perception.**



Method 8



Method 9



Detail Code 88341

**The method of the progressing halving of the planes (albeit disturbed by small deviations), starting out from the intersection at the center, is one of reflexive self-application.**



Detail Code 86299

**The vortex of significance of such layers is made possible and demanded by a certain kind of aesthetic perception. The complexity of these layers is no longer about compositions but also no longer about meaning or significance but rather about the sliding of differences that results from the shifting, differential multiplication.**

unpredictable visual effects. The incomprehensibility or complexity of the latter gives them a semantic aura, a particular suggestiveness. The simplest elements and simplest rules produce, as a result of the processual, additive layering, highly complex results composed of series of microdifferences (or microrhythms or microintervals). The indirect method for producing visual effects—on the one hand, by strictly formal, regulated methods; on the other hand, by deviations or disturbances and not least by producing uncontrollable, self-similar layers, and hence the indirect, unintentional production of highly complex, self-similar figures—produces above all a strong, semantic suggestion, a suggestive significance without a specific meaning; and overcomplex, contingent distributions (the stars in the sky) or overcomplex artistic procedures of deviation and disturbance (for example, Gerhard Richter's abstract paintings) can produce such a vortex: the vortex of the suggestion of an order that is overly complex and can no longer be grasped.

This kind of suggestion can be observed better in music: slightly transposed, slightly shifted, layers of simple patterns (the classic model for this is Steve Reich's "phase patterns") produce by addition by a complex play of repetitions and shifts, which demands entirely new techniques of asemantic perception, a perception of deviations and shifted layers. Or, the second model, the compositional density of a piece of music increases until an overly complex order results that can no longer be grasped by listening (and hence cannot be reconstructed compositionally), which for the listener suddenly becomes chaotic noise (Pierre Boulez has worked with such methods, for example).

The vortex of significance of such layers is made possible and demanded by a certain kind of aesthetic perception. The complexity of these layers is no longer about compositions but also no longer about meaning or significance but rather about the sliding of differences that results from the shifting, differential multiplication.

The suggestiveness of such overcomplexity is closely connected to its impenetrability; the latter presumes simple, repeating, and layered patterns and drives them to the incomprehensible. The overlapping orders (always the same iterative and self-similar patterns like those of Steve Reich or Steffen Schlichter or compositional density of the likes of Pierre Boulez or Gerhard Richter) become overcomplex and implode at a point that can vary according to individual but is unavoidable. Just as there is an acoustic implosion, is there not always the catastrophic imploding of a hypercomplexity of overlapping or condensation that can no longer be analyzed acoustically into a chaotic noise, even a visual implosion, a visual "noise"?

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## II. System and List

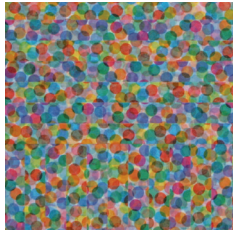
Steffen Schlichter locates his works between two poles whose antithesis not only cannot be resolved but also lends them a particular tension—a tension that recurs repeatedly in various places and at various moments in his works or in his work and is a very crucial feature of his work.

His works—which he calls "works" because he is anchored in modern art's (especially modern painting's) critique of idealism in the 1960s, in art that was then becoming conceptual, which deliberately and actively undermined essential categories of idealistic modernism, such as the "author," the "work of art," the "composition," and derived from that the "creation" or "authenticity"—are at the same time works of art in a complex sense of that phrase that is no longer naive: they often transgress mere facticity or phenomenalism (in the somewhat shallow sense in which one spoke of a phenomenological turn in art around and after 1960, especially in the United States) of the regular and comprehensible quality of manufactured objects and thus once again bring into play, indirectly, either aesthetic authorship and aesthetic character of the work but have not fundamentally changed. The author no longer understands the work as the articulation of an immaterial creative power (the imagination) but rather sees in the work complex phenomena and multiple meanings of perception that demand a new, nonidealistic concept of the aesthetic (or of the aesthetic sphere).

Steffen Schlichter locates his works—apart from literal locations in storerooms and on selves, in temporary or long-term storage—in a chronological list of works, on the one hand, in which they are assigned a date and signature, and, on the other hand, in a system that assigns a five-digit code to each work. These codes form a logical, systematic ordering system that exists in parallel with the list of his works but does not correspond to it in the slightest; above all, its approach is not chronological but rather discharges, produces possible works like a generative structure (analogous to the generative structure of a natural language, which makes it possible to form sentences).

These codes derive from a (fictive) program that defines and produces the artist's works to be realized as possible positions within a predetermined combinatorics; every single work is determined by the combinatorics of the program and realizes a structural potentiality. The code thus assigns to every work a place within a matrix that predetermines it. As a result, the individual works can be perceived as realizations of combinatorial possibilities, as applications of existing laws, and derivations of preestablished rules—just as, for example, the Black Paintings of Frank Stella did this exercise on a basic level.

Conversely, an artist's list of works is understood to be a list of the individual works that an artist, an author, has created as subject-like individuals



Detail Code 79319

**These codes form a logical, systematic ordering system that exists in parallel with the list of his works.**



Program folders Codes



and is made after those works, in chronologic order, and hence completely contingent and not conforming to any rules. Works of art in the spirit of idealistic aesthetics (as formulated by the modern era) are similar to subjects because they are individual articulations of subjectivity—and subjectivity exists, strictly speaking, only in and through its articulations or expressions.

The list of works is chronological and, in keeping with the miracle of artistic creation, contingent; the program fabricates a predetermined non-chronological ordering structure. As a result of this dual determination in two irreconcilable systems of order, the individual works are also marked

**As a result of this dual determination in two irreconcilable systems of order, the individual works are also marked in two ways.**

in two—contradictory—ways: first, by including them in the list of works they are declared, more or less arbitrarily, to be authentic authorial works of art, which are subject to the mysterious of historical and biographical contingency; second, they are understood to be the objective realization and materialization of derived, rule-based possibilities within a structure; their material existence is then secondary to the generative grammar, the rules or laws of formation from which they were produced—then they are simply tools my means of which the potentiality of language or the laws of formation take on a sensory, material reality.

### III. Installation

The second, roughly equally important group of works in Steffen Schlichter's oeuvre comprises his installations. It includes very different types of works: First, there are works that expand his “materialist painting” to preexisting surfaces on real walls or floors, such as Bodenprobe Benutzeroberfläche (Soil sample user interface) and 766 x. One important

**110.3 : 100.3; or, Let's agree on undecided [Soil sample—user interface III]**

aspect of these works is markings that emphasize specific places on the wall or in the space and draw attention to them without making it evident why these places are marked—or why perception should be directed or shifted. In a certain sense, in these installations the work is a

tool that clarifies the given place in a site-specific way and makes it visible: by exhibiting, marking, and changing the site, the method makes it, along with its particular conditions and qualities, visible and public. But what is being pointed to, recommended to our attention, or moved into our focus is not evident and does not speak for itself: they are random remnants of the real use of materials and real work, which take on a mysterious, suggestive, pseudo-compositional and pseudo-authorial quality by being transferred to other spaces and staged in an installation.

The complex work 100,3 : 100,3; oder, Einigen wir uns auf unentschieden (Bodenprobe – Benutzeroberfläche III) (110.3:100.3; or, Let's agree on undecided [Soil sample—user interface III]) was exhibited, or rather



Cologne 1999

stated, at the Moltkerei Werkstatt in Cologne. “Sale of the contents of the storeroom of a carpenter’s workshop in autumn 1997: ca. 1,000 parts, with particle board, fiberboard, etc., in a wide variety of sizes and thicknesses. The total quantity of boards represents a store of specific parts, which can be used for future works. Every individual board can be understood as specific information during whose making the attention of the carpenter or of the customer was, however, not focused on this piece that is yet present but rather originally on one or more parts that the customer needed for a specific purpose in order to leave behind the remnants found in the store as ‘negative information.’” These leftover cuts, these negative forms from the carpenter’s real work, were installed in the following way:

“The dimensions of the Moltkerei Werkstatt were related to the store of particle boards: 1. Particle boards were removed from the store piece by piece, measured, the dimensions being noted, and set aside separately. 2. Once the dimension in square meters derived from the plan for the room in question (exhibition space, office, storeroom, kitchen, restroom) had been reached by adding the dimensions of the individual boards, the room in question was defined by the corresponding number of boards. There were 427 pieces in all, covering the entire floor area of the Moltkerei Werkstatt: 100.3 square meters. 3. Once they had been transported to the rooms of the Moltkerei Werkstatt, the boards, whose dimensions had not been altered, were spread out flat on the floor. This was done according to the following criteria: (a) In the exhibition room, they were spread out with as few gaps as possible, taking into account functional considerations such as doors opening inward and the radiator, which sits on the floor. The ‘remnants’ resulting from the discrepancy between planning and the actual realization in the room necessitated a second layer of boards, which were distributed freely on top of the first one. (b) In the adjoining rooms (office, storeroom, kitchen, restroom), there are various pieces of furniture and fixtures. There the boards were arranged as closely as possible around the furniture and objects. In keeping with the large number of “disruptive factors,” a second, third, or fourth layer of boards had to be spread out. Here too the functional circumstances of the rooms (opening and closing doors, etc.) were taken into account. All the boards were returned to storage following the installation.”<sup>3</sup>

**766 x**

The multistage work 766 x is similarly complex in its play with contingent distributions. “For the project Gewerkstellatation II (Zur Klärung) (Workstellatation [For clarification]), June 22–July 7, 1996, at the Kunstforum in Weilheim an der Teck, all of the wallpaper on the walls of the gallery were removed to expose the structures of countless holes beneath. Then a grid was drawn in pencil on a gallery wall (2.40 × 4.65 m) chosen as an example; using the grid as an aid, the precise



Cologne 1999

**One important aspect of these works is markings that emphasize specific places on the wall or in the space and draw attention to them without making it evident why these places are marked —or why perception should be directed or shifted.**



Weilheim 1996



Reutlingen 2004

position of every hole in the wall was determined and transferred to graph paper on a scale of 1 to 10. The resulting diagram served as the basis for various subsequent works.”<sup>4</sup> During the next step, in 1977, this diagram was employed in another room, for the exhibition 766 × at the Stiftung für konkrete Kunst in Reutlingen. First, “the 766 dots of the diagram from August 1996 were transferred, according to their precise position, to 766 sheets of A2 paper. They were ‘scanned’ systematically using a light table, a straightedge, and an ink pen, working from left to right or, for the wholes found in a vertical line, from top to bottom. A [...] copy of these 766 A2 sheets covered the walls of the exhibition space on the top floor of the Stiftung für Konkrete Kunst in Reutlingen, in seven rows of 110 sheets each. The 766 holes were marked with a nail in the positions indicated on the sheets. Then the sheets were removed.”<sup>5</sup> In another step eight years later, for the exhibition 766 × (Wiederaufnahme: 0 KB) (766 × [Revival: 0 KB]) at the Stiftung für Konkrete Kunst in Reutlingen; 766 nails were nailed into the wall according to chance criteria; 766 blank CDs were hung on the, that is to say, digital storage with 0 KB.

**Ultimately, it was based on the analogy of objects of perception and linguistic elements; the analogy of the order of things and order of knowledge.**

Other installations include works that install the extensive holdings in storage in the existing spaces in such a way that they function like a localization or inventory of these holdings (which include works but also materials, tools, ordering architectures, lists, “paths”). Steffen Schlichter calls these installations “subsumption architectures.” Although he himself associates other

implications with this name, he is referring in part to the subsuming work of reason, which subsumes all the objects of perception to its concepts and hence to a metal architecture, to a structure ordering of the terms—and in the process identifies them in the first place. These installations include his “Gewerkstellationen”; one especially interesting example of these is Server: 270=250 (Gewerkstellatation III) at the Bahnwärterhaus Esslingen, 2002. In Esslingen, Schlichter set up a storage structure of heavy-duty shelving that functioned as “hiding places” or potential storage sites. For the opening, this storage was then filled with a wide variety of works and materials from his holdings (everything has its storage place); over the course of the exhibition, each week some of these holdings were removed arbitrarily (selected by Andreas Baur, the director of the Villa Merkel), so that at the end the storage system was empty again.

This installation, in which he explicitly called the Bahnwärterhaus a “server,” worked on the analogy of a storeroom (with its shelving system) and the computer (with its storage system); of material and immaterial storage; of storage as the regulated storing of objects; and of knowledge storage. Ultimately, it was based on the analogy of objects of perception and linguistic elements; the analogy of the order of things and order of knowledge. Hence discursive knowledge and information stored on media are equated. The analogy behind this is of consciousness (or, more precisely, know-



Esslingen 2002



Esslingen 2002

ledge) and computer, of mental storage of knowledge and digital storage of information (in which the contents of consciousness are outsourced but not replaced) alludes to the ordering and architecture of storage—that is, to the location in the storage and the organization of access.

The analogy of world order and consciousness, which can be traced back to the antithesis between the world of objects, which has to be identified by perception (apperceived), and the world of concepts, which is what comprehends the objects in the world in the first place, confronts the viewer with the primary or original separation or rift on which European metaphysics was based: the opposition of the material and the spiritual world. German idealism understood any comprehension of an object as the subsumption of its sensory data to its concept. Every object is only understood if it is perceived consciously and is therefore subsumed to the schematics of concepts or to the system of knowledge. The order of things is a classificatory order of knowledge. Consciousness is therefore, among other things, a form of storage whose classification and “architecture” of this classification are just as important as its content.

#### IV. Aesthetics

Because Steffen Schlichter works by opposing very different ways of perceiving, several aesthetics come into play. His point of departure in history is an antithesis that was crucial to the modern era in Europe: that between the functional view, which is concerned with apprehending physical objects in space and comprehending them haptically and conceptually, and the idealistic, aesthetic view, which understands a work of art as an articulation like a text that results from the conscious or expressive and unconscious work of an author. Schlichter counters this idealistic aesthetic of the modern era by undermining its essential categories: authorship, creative production, the work of art, composition, and aesthetic sensuousness (of aesthetic illusion). At the same time, however, he recognizes that as an artist he can never elude the idealistic aesthetic entirely; as a fundamental—albeit historically and culturally conditioned—model for aesthetic perception in the modern era in Europe; it cannot simply be overcome by adopting a critical aesthetic view but instead sublated (in Hegel’s sense: first, it is preserved; second, its validity is denied, and third, it is elevated to a higher, more reflective level); that is why Schlichter alludes to it repeatedly.

On the opposite pole of sublated idealistic aesthetics, Schlichter places together with the heroes of the critical postmodernism of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Frank Stella and Robert Ryman, a “materialist” aesthetic, a self-reflection, and self-criticism of idealistic modernism, which called into question the sensuousness of works of art and began to study the pictorial and contextual conditions under which a material surfaced



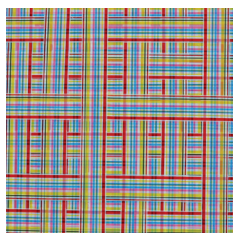
Stuttgart 2000



Neuhausen 1999

**Schlichter counters this idealistic aesthetic of the modern era by undermining its essential categories.**





Detail Code 61738

**Rather than presenting  
a rule, a law, or a method,  
the differential self-similarity  
of the patterns emerges.**

perceived as functional can suddenly turn into an aesthetically perceived picture plane. This sudden change thus turns out to be something that can occur independently of the intentions of an author and even independently of all authorship—and in this way aesthetic perception breaks free of art. The most extreme (and probably most universal as well as most common) conclusion of this view is that anything can be perceived aesthetically—that is, contemplated as a composed, authorial work of art.

The irrational, creative, and spontaneous composition of idealistic aesthetics with its aesthetic illusion (which should be called, more precisely, the aesthetic appearance or aesthetic phenomenalism) was for many of the early critical postmodernist artists replaced by the geometric or mathematical “ideality” of a method. Derivation from rule enables the work to emerge on its own, so to speak. The more intelligible a mathematical order it, the more it is recognized as a rule or law and not as a mere object. The geometric simplicity of the series, the iteration, the grid, the additive repetition enables the viewer to perceive the rational intelligibility of the method. That recalls the “objective” aesthetic of Platonism, for which the mathematical intelligibility of an object, its geometric or relational simplicity, constituted its beauty.

But several of Steffen Schlichter’s methods very radically transcend the method’s logical, geometric intelligibility by means of superimpositions and layers that work with minimal differences, with deviations, shifts, and disturbances. In these works, the layers and superimpositions can no longer be derived from a function; they result only from the fact that every step can be applied reflexively or in reverse to itself. In such fractal series, the smallest visual deviations are reinforced more and more, increasingly resulting in an over-complexity that is neither intelligible nor scrutable and whose apparent chaos is linked to powerful suggestiveness. Rather than presenting a rule, a law, or a method, the differential self-similarity of the patterns emerges.

Notes:

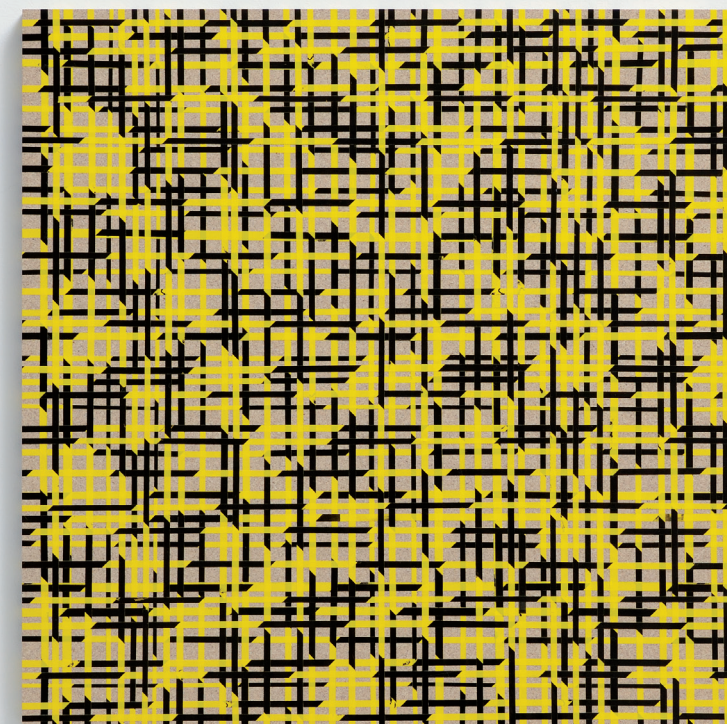
<sup>1</sup> Steffen Schlichter

<sup>2</sup> Steffen Schlichter, letter to Johannes Meinhardt, December, 17, 2012

<sup>3</sup> Steffen Schlichter

<sup>4</sup> Steffen Schlichter

<sup>5</sup> Steffen Schlichter



Code 77336  
12/12  
Spanplatte, Klebeband  
Chipboard, adhesive tape  
60 x 60 x 1,9 cm  
VVZ 12067