

On Rhythm and Calm

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Some centuries before the conquest of the world by the Italian Renaissance, China, about the time of the Song Dynasty, saw a kind of painting that completely indulged in meditation. Immersing oneself in what one saw—in the landscape, in water, in mountains—was vital for painting pictures. The ink paintings depicting sceneries rather express the soul of nature and its inherent spirit than aiming at providing us with a mere likeness. Painted on rolls of silk, the works were stored away in precious receptacles to be enjoyed in some contemplative moment at a later time. The actual purpose of these pictures of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was their meditative contemplation. Their importance equaled those of works by poets.

Following the painter Rudolfine P. Rossmann into her studio, one plunges into a universe of painting reminiscent of these Chinese traditions: a gallery of large-format works on paper on the walls; other works, still unfinished, on tables; mid-size boxes with sketches for special presentations in between; canvases, contrasting with the works on paper, on another wall. Only slackening its grip here and there, the meticulous order that prevails in the studio rounds off the impression of a world tuned to the Far East.

Rudolfine P. Rossmann is an artist who counts herself lucky to have had many opportunities to work on different continents of the earth. These include longer stays in South East Asia, in China and Indonesia, as well as in the United States. This might explain why the Austrian art market is still only little aware of her paintings. Her art—and this is more significant than her presence on the local market—is hardly conceivable without these numerous travels. It was in South Asia, the region she often returned to, where her striking fascination with working on precious paper developed.

In the case of the *China Series*, the artist has applied small drops of ink on originally folded Xuan paper. These drops form a kind of all-over, spreading across the paper regardless of any defined center. The arrangement of the ink dots has been thought through before the artist begins to work; the result is determined by their order and occasional coincidences when applying the ink. The *Guangdong Series* from 2005 and 2006 comprises multi-layer ink paintings whose strata have been put on one after the other. With each layer displaying a specific arrangement of drops, the entire compound conveys a three-dimensional character—a pictorial world that equally emphasizes the far and the near, the black dots generally sitting on lighter layers. This contributes to the works' cosmic appearance.

The structure of the artist's works on paper after the *Guangdong Series*, from 2007 on presents itself as completely different. The sheets have only one layer of drops. Of course, we are also confronted with an interplay between the near and the far here, especially when some drops have been put on with more and others with less ink. These works, which unfold rather an earthbound than a cosmic dimension, mainly underscore the processual being by developing from top to bottom or from left to right and sometimes also reveal open areas. Powerful examples alternate with others presenting themselves with less impact which—to put it in terms of music—are essentially concerned with fermate. These develop their being out of the void: a thoroughly Far Eastern drift.

It is certainly not wrong to speak of a search for traces in regard to those works with a more open structure. One dot follows another; one comes upon little oases here and there emphasized with ink, while a world of flowing dots spreads across the rest of the paper: sometimes a kind of door opens, or we are, cartographically speaking, granted a view of an imaginary landscape.

It seems to be one of Rudolfine P. Rossmann's basic principles to visualize opposites in her work as an artist, to dedicate herself to the dialectics of life as a law of nature: flowing/fixed, deep/flat, ordered/chaotic, etc. Her canvases disclose this approach. In the works dating from 2002 to 2004, which strike us as rigid, nothing is left to chance. Order prevails. Based on the series *Lejano Lane*, the *Dot Series* evolved: a number of canvas works in Egg tempera. Inspired by intense experiences of nature during a stay in the United States, this group of works no longer depends on the singular color elements flowing into and on top of each other, but rather on exactly applied dots. These are put on with a stamp dipped into color; their place has been determined beforehand by dividing the canvas into suitable small areas. Not each of these dots, however, resembles another in its effect. It is the color again which creates modulations. Changing the application of color results in fluctuations that remind us of the artist's works on paper.

Badlands from 2004, for example, makes us think of a world map. Blue and brown dots alternate so that an interplay between figure and ground suggests itself to the eye. We jump from the front to the back. This grid structure entirely corresponds with today's world of perception in which many things approach us in the form of pixels. It is up to us to not consider this pixelated world as the only truth. Artists like Rudolfine P. Rossmann continuously make us see that being always encompasses the processual. The world is in a state of flux, and art with it—this art.