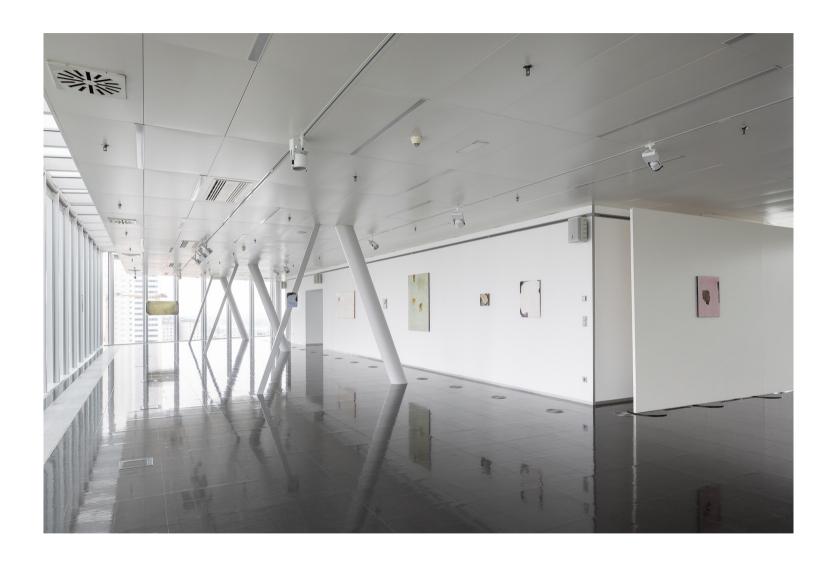
Markus Saile

The works of Markus Saile suggest a change of medium with regard to painting. The line has become a trace. Paint has become turpentine. Painting has become unstable because turpentine, used to thin oil paint, has separated it from its undercoat, allowing it to slide, slip, fly across the smooth surface. The effect penetrates the eye and could have its counterpart there: fluff on retina. Moments of seeing which

have nothing real and nothing unreal before them, but rather an indescribably fleeting, material something which appears to be very close. The formats vary, are frequently small, often eye images, with only the larger ones as body images. Sometimes they act contrary to the idea of good picture proportions in painting, with shapes that are almost square or nearly DIN format.

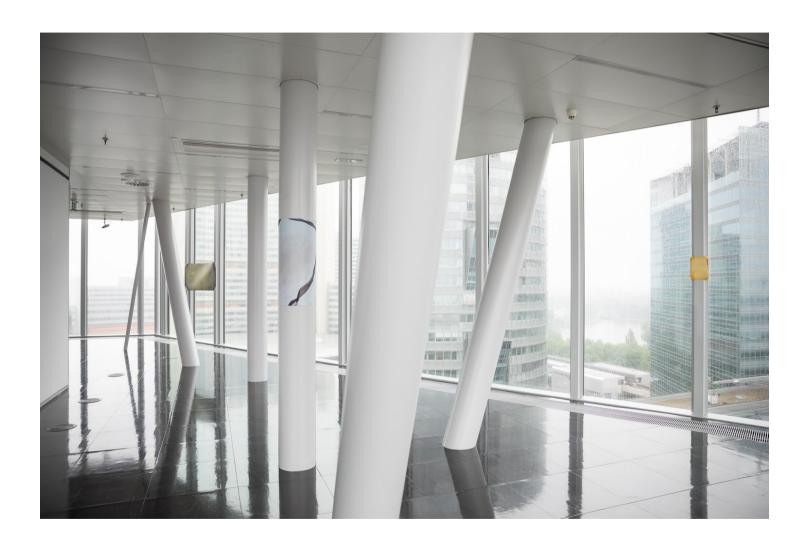
There is a chalk ground which creates a perpetually slippery surface. And at the same time this smooth surface produces a background radiance.



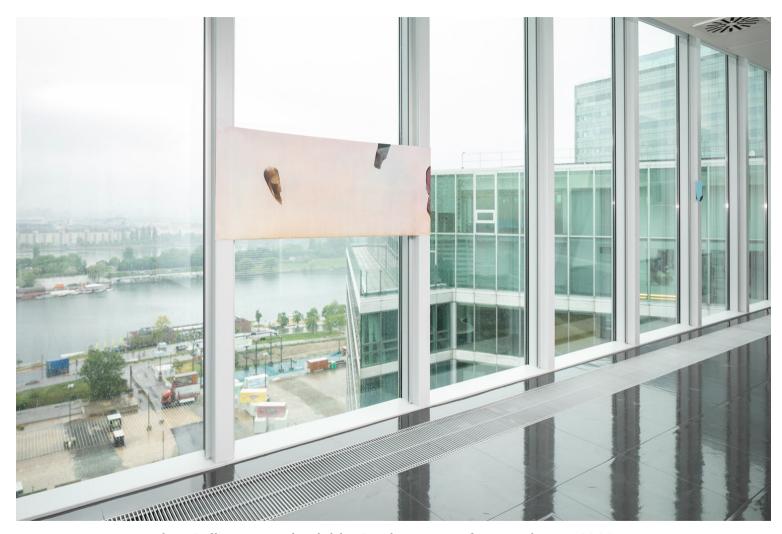
Markus Saile, Magnetic Fields, Strabag, Kunstforum, Vienna, 2020



Markus Saile, Magnetic Fields, Strabag, Kunstforum, Vienna, 2020



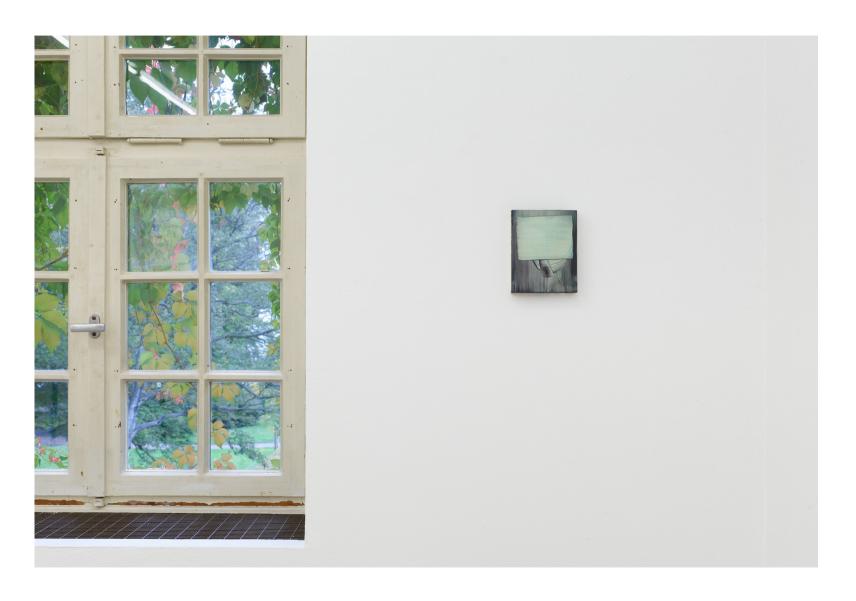
Markus Saile, Magnetic Fields, Strabag, Kunstforum, Vienna, 2020



Markus Saile, Magnetic Fields, Strabag, Kunstforum, Vienna, 2020



Markus Saile, Magnetic Fields, Strabag, Kunstforum, Vienna, 2020



Markus Saile, separate | related (TWODO Collection), NAK, Aachen, 2020



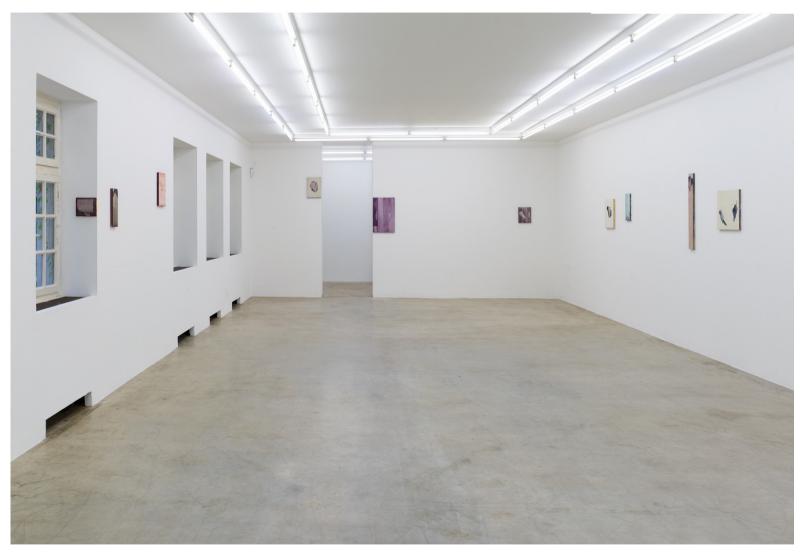
Markus Saile, separate | related (TWODO Collection), NAK, Aachen, 2020



Markus Saile, separate | related (TWODO Collection), NAK, Aachen, 2020



Markus Saile, separate | related (TWODO Collection), NAK, Aachen, 2020



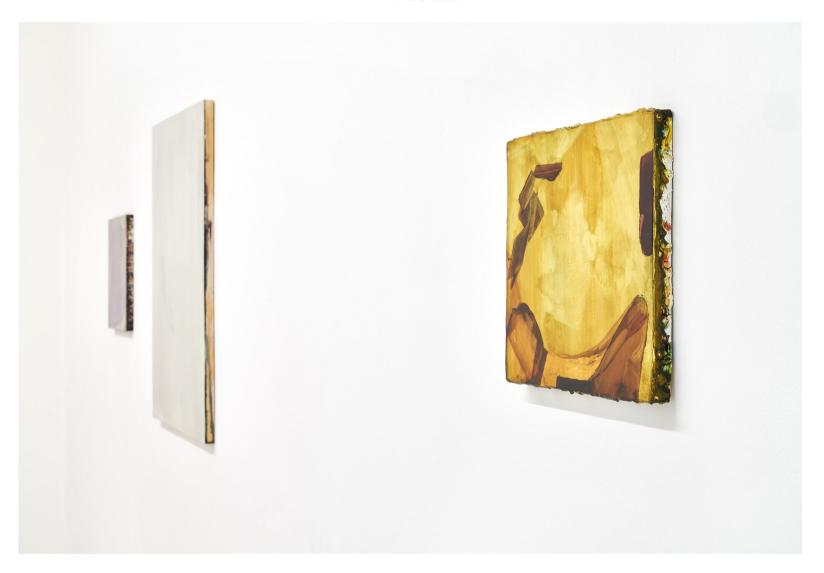
Markus Saile, separate | related (TWODO Collection), NAK, Aachen, 2020



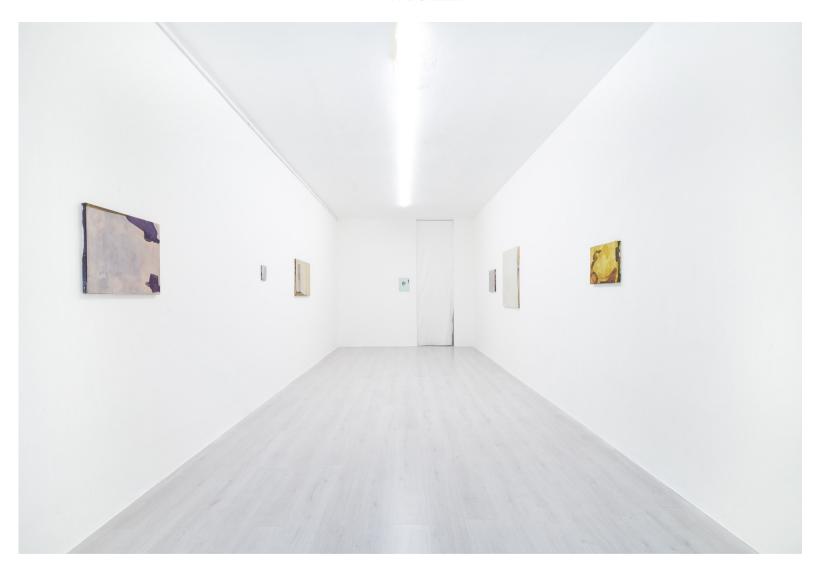
Markus Saile, separate | related (TWODO Collection), NAK, Aachen



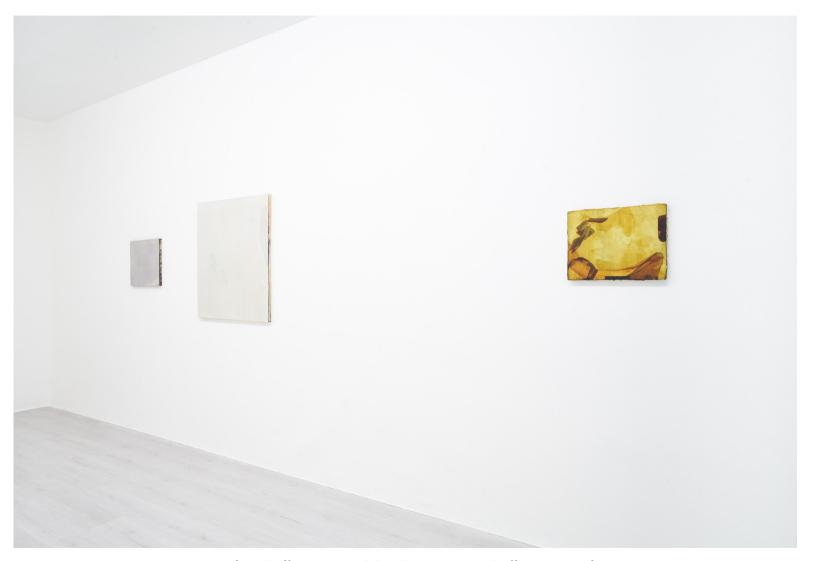
Markus Saile, FINALI SONO INIZI, A+B Gallery, Brescia, 2019



Markus Saile, FINALI SONO INIZI, A+B Gallery, Brescia, 2019



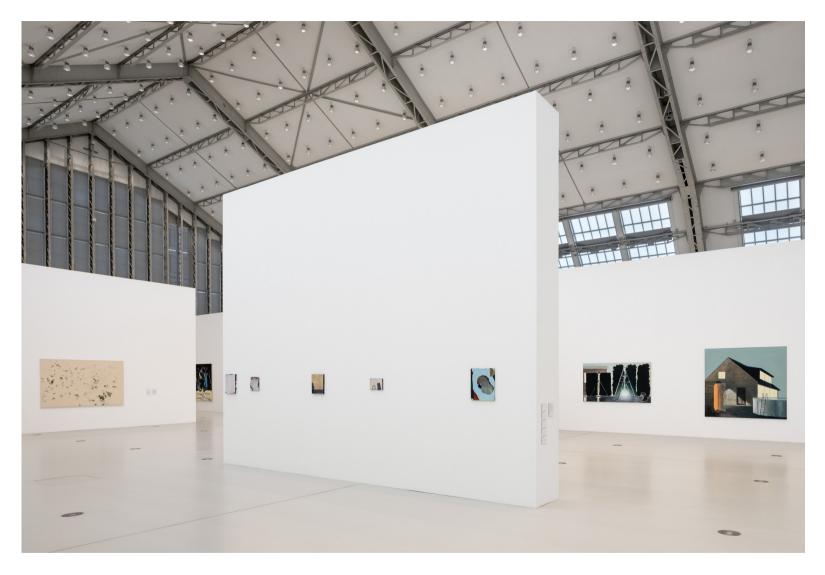
Markus Saile, FINALI SONO INIZI, A+B Gallery, Brescia, 2019



Markus Saile, FINALI SONO INIZI, A+B Gallery, Brescia, 2019



Markus Saile, Jetzt! Junge Malerei in Deutschland, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, 2020



Markus Saile, Jetzt! Junge Malerei in Deutschland, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, 2020



Markus Saile, Untited 2021 oil on wood, 97x69cm Euro 7400 vat incl



Markus Saile, Untiteld 2021 oil on wood, 44x58cm Euro 4500 vat incl



Markus Saile, Untitled 2021 oil on wood, 58x44cm Euro 4500 vat incl



Markus Saile, Untitled 2021 oil on wood, 46x36cm Euro 3600 vat incl



Markus Saile, Untitled 2021 Oil on canvas, 42x39cm Euro 3600 vat incl



Markus Saile, Untitled 2021 oil on wood, 30x37cm Euro 3000 vat incl



Markus Saile, Untitled 2021 oil on wood, 33x21cm Euro 2500 vat incl



Markus Saile, Untitled 2021 oil on wood, 35x18cm Euro 2500 vat incl



Markus Saile, Untitled 2021 oil on wood, 25,1x20cm Euro 2500 vat incl



Markus Saile, Untitled 2021 oil on wood, 23x18cm Euro 2000 vat incl (published) teal, olive, russet, and violet, or somber

grays rimed with ice. Though the

MARKUS SAILE

"when the norms of painting are put to the test, what is arbitrary will have the last word."¹

The exhibition separate/related consists of intimate, abstract studies in translucent oil paint layered on plywood panels prepared with an ultra-smooth chalk ground.² Their palette is reduced, each painting consisting of one to three moody colors: muted tertiaries like coral,

passionate paint-flinging of the Abstract
Expressionists, but a methodical
process of doing and undoing. Neither is
it a Minimalist exercise in delimiting
material constraints, but a
deconstruction of the material's
expressive potential. The primary feature
of these paintings, the site of their
structuralist exploration, is the
translucent brushstroke.

Markus Saile—the artist
responsible for these enigmatic
paintings—is of course not the first to
foreground the translucent brushstroke.
His work is in dialogue with artists such
as David Reed (1946-), Bernard Frize
(1949-), James Nares (1953-), and
Robert Janitz (1962-). Contrasting them
with Saile helps to indicate the

gestural curves. This is not the

compositions are straightforward, the colors are built out of many layers of thin glazes as indicated by the buildup of excess paint on the exposed sides. An apparent simplicity of form and color is therefore revealed to be laboriously constructed through subtle corrections and adjustments. The liquid paint, thinned with an abundance of turpentine, glides over itself, sometimes washing away parts of still-wet brushstrokes or pooling as the panel's edge scrapes paint from the brush's bristles. The brushstrokes are broad, either coating the surface evenly or folding over themselves in gentle

¹ Yve-Alain Bois, "Ryman's Tact" in *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 226.

² separate|related was exhibited at the NAK-Neue Aachener Kunstverein from October 11-November 29, 2020. It was part of the Kunstverein's annual TWODO Collection exhibition series.

specificity of his practice. Notably, all these artists work at a scale far in excess of Saile's modest panels. Distinguishing features can also be identified among their handling of the medium and their arrangement of figure and ground. Reed's first post-minimalist canvases, striped with fat horizontal brushstrokes in sloppy black or red paint, soon evolved into experiments with translucent paint applied in serpentine squiggles with brush or knife onto neogeo color fields. But whereas Reed's crisp rectangular fields and convoluted brushstrokes take on the multiplied appearance of collage, for Saile the orthogonal and the sinuous emerge from the same field. Like Saile, Bernard Frize explores effects produced by loading the brush with multiple colors. Frize's occasional soft curtains or cascades of paint resemble Saile's gentle compositions, but he more often pushes his brushwork into agate-like striations, rigid lattices, or basket-weave patterns antithetical to Saile's subtly modulated surfaces. James Nares' practice revolves around the gestural deployment of a single ribbon-like brushstroke whose translucency, as in work by Saile, often creates a volumetric illusion. But the triumphant scale at which she paints and her individualistic gusto contrast absolutely with Saile's intimate and anonymous panels. Janitz comes closest to Saile in the way his translucent brushstrokes create a screen through which a variegated color field can be

glimpsed. But he layers his brushwork over smooth gradients, creating a stark contrast between the gestural and the mechanical. Saile differs from all these artists in that the tensions internal to his work emerge not from discrete elements but from a heterogeneity of handling. The same brushstrokes create figure and ground, the same layering creates color and shape. Exploiting the versatility of the translucent brushstroke, Saile treats paint as a self-differing medium.

In separate/related, this self-differentiation functions as an organizing principle emblematized by a series of tall, narrow panels called "pipes" by the artist. As the exhibition text reveals, the shape of these paintings has been modeled on a typographic mark—the

same that appears in the show's title. This vertical bar has many names. The term "pipe," though now in more general usage, originally stemmed from computer science, where it was used in programming to chain a set of processes together into a "pipeline." The output of one process is redirected and becomes the input of another process instead of being displayed on the monitor. The pipeline thus hides the inter-process communication, and if no record is made, it is described as an "anonymous pipe." Treating the pipe more or less as a slash (after all, both are descended from the medieval virgule), Saile describes it as simultaneously connecting and separating two terms. This calls to mind the process of signification, in which

signifier and signified are at once separate and related: a word is evidently different from the thing it refers to, but they are related by the conventions of language. The innovation of the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, founder of semiotics, was the acknowledgement that a signifier is not only separate from and related to its signified, but also to all other signifiers. Therefore, there is no origin of signification but rather a chain of differences that proceeds, like interprocess communication, largely hidden from consciousness.

That Saile has named certain paintings after pipes is not as simple as it may seem at first. The pipe paintings are not just pipe-shaped paintings.

When looking at one of these paintings, one of course thinks, "this is not a pipe," but nor is it a painting of a pipe, as Magritte would have it. Nor is it a painted pipe, as if the wooden panel were a pipe before it was painted. No, the painting itself has been given the function of a pipe, which is to create a hidden interprocess. The pipe therefore concretizes a characteristic immanent to Saile's work even beyond this exhibition: his attempt to reflect the very procedure by which painting signifies. This is why I describe his work as structuralist. It is fitting that he should choose a typographic mark to emblematize this characteristic, for it is a structuralism of the mark, that is, of the brushstroke.

This is the quality that connects

Saile's work with Robert Ryman's, work which Yve-Alain Bois described as deconstructing the brushstroke. Bois rejects the interpretation of Ryman's practice as an investigation of "process." The recourse to "process" as a way of explaining such paintings is a reaction to their intransigence, an attempt to locate meaning elsewhere. Bois writes, "the narrative of process establishes a primary meaning, an ultimate, originating referent that cuts off the interpretive chain. That is, an aesthetic of causality is reintroduced, a positivist monologue that we thought modern art was supposed to have gotten rid of."3 Against this narrative, Bois sees Ryman as embracing arbitrariness rather than

causality. His wiggly white brushstrokes do not emphasize the flatness of the painted surface but the quotient of arbitrariness that remains after the painting has been reduced to flatness. Saile furthers the deconstruction of the brushstroke that Yve-Alain Bois so admired in Robert Ryman's work. But whereas the latter was a master of opacity, Saile's investigation focuses on translucency. Ryman explored figure and ground through the brute fact of application, not just of paint on substrate but also of substrate on wall (hence his fascination with fastening). For Saile, on the other hand, application becomes indeterminate: the paint is thinned to such a degree that the act of applying it serves as well to remove it. A new stroke

is often carved into the surface as much as applied to it.

This thinness and translucency introduce an accidental illusionism, a dimension of arbitrariness never explored in Ryman's work. As the bristles deposit the translucent medium unevenly on the surface, the brushstrokes take on the guise of fronds, feathers, sheets of rain, ribbons, veils, locks of hair, or seashells. The effect of these folded and flattened strokes is a sense of potentiality rather than of determinacy. Look closer at the almostsquare, graphite gray painting. It is sectioned into three vertical swathes delicately lined like leeks with two curving brushstrokes flanking the central section, one seeming to thrust boldly

³ Bois, "Ryman's Tact," 216.

into the viewer's space while the other retreats shyly behind the dominant vertical. Despite its morbid color, the painting has all the organic vigor of a vegetal stalk, symmetrically framed like a Blossfeldt close-up. The translucent brushstroke is especially suited to giving this sense of fleshiness, growth, and movement, imbuing the paint with liveliness. The critical point is that this liveliness seems a property of the medium rather than the artist who manipulates it.

This description may recall recent writing on painting, especially David Joselit's network theory of painting and Isabelle Graw's description of a vitalist economy of painting.⁴ However, both

Joselit and Graw situate the agency or vitality of the artwork in a relation between the object and something beyond it, rather than an internal or immanent relation, as I have identified in Saile's work. For Joselit, painting visualizes its position in a network by becoming a "personage" vis à vis the artist or the viewer. The limitation of this argument is encapsulated by the implicit assumption that a painting can only be visualized as an object in a network if it stands in for a human agent. Graw also describes the painting as standing in for a human agent, specifically the artist. Drawing on Marxist value theory, she

Graw, *The Love of Painting: Genealogy of a Success Medium* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2018), and "Notes on the exhibition *The Vitalist Economy of Painting*" which accompanied the exhibition she curated at Galerie Neu, Berlin (September 15 – November 11, 2018).

argues that painting nourishes a fantasy of unalienated labor, as if it were a natural extension of its creator. In both Joselit and Graw's cases, the vitality of painting is borrowed from humans who are the proper agents. In my reading of Saile's paintings, their vitality is also borrowed, but not from people. Rather, their sense of vitality is borrowed from the sign system. Because this inhuman animacy is uncanny, it is tempting to try to reinscribe Saile's paintings within a human frame of reference. For example, in his essay "Time Batteries," Baptist Ohrtmann reads the horizontal and vertical in Saile's paintings as evocations of landscape and body respectively. But this reference to a universalized, given figure/ground relation rooted in

⁴ See David Joselit, "Painting Beside Itself" *October* 130 (Fall 2009), 125-134; Isabelle

anthropocentric perspective cannot be found in *separate*/*related*. The attenuated verticality of the pipe is not a humanist portrait format but an antihumanist cipher: it shows that the subject is animated by language rather than the other way around.

There is a mystery in this process of animation, made tangible in the illusion of life conveyed by Saile's translucent brushstroke. While illusionism necessitates a sense of space, Saile's work does not take on the optical spatiality of post-Renaissance painting—which coheres around a stable subject position—but the oneiric, decentered spatiality of Surrealism. It is an illusionism that seems to spring from the material itself, like the fantastical

forms produced by automatic techniques such as decalcomania, fumage, or grattage. Rather than locating the meaning of the work in the process of its making, such processes unveil a meaning whose origin is indeterminate and alien. The Surrealists often amplified the uncanny aspects of such automatic techniques by detailing the resultant shapes with illusionistic features such as faces or shadows, turning them into landscapes or ruins or monstrous bodies. Saile shows how unnecessary these modifications are. With his transparent brushstrokes, he demonstrates that the painterly gesture itself can maintain the tension between automaticity and illusionism. And he does so without the Jungian claptrap of

the Abstract Expressionists, for it is not his own unconscious that speaks through the medium of paint, but the medium's unconscious, an unconscious structured like a language. The only indication of its subterranean operation is slurry in an anonymous pipe.

CURRICULUM VITAE	EXHIBITION	2017
		time is the longest distance (with
	SOLO EXHIBITIONS	Talisa Lallai), Galerie Nathalie
		Halgand, Vienna
	2020	2014
	separate related (TWODO	Magere Zeiten, RECEPTION, Berlin
	Collection), NAK Neuer Aachener	
	Kunstverein, Aachen	2013
	Magnetic Fields, Strabag	Crystal Clear & Cloudy (with Dani
	Kunstforum, Vienna	Jakob), RECEPTION, Berlin
	Where We Are (with Marcel Hiller), in	Ein leichtes Rascheln (with
	and on a van, fair grounds, Cologne	Samantha Bohatsch), PiK, Cologne
		non-travail, Kunstverein
	2019	Springhornhof
Markus Saile was born in Stuttgart (1981).	FINALI SONO INIZI, A+B Gallery,	
	Brescia, Italy	2012
	Das und gleicht dem Chamäleon,	Schichtwechsel, RECEPTION, Berlin
He lives and works in Cologne and is	Galerie Markus Lüttgen, Düsseldorf	Markus Saile, Ringstube, Mainz
the co-founder and curator at PiK		
Deutz in Cologne (2014-2018).		

2011	2019	Aachen
Cliffhanger, RECEPTION, Berlin	Jahresgaben, Bielefelder	I CAUGHT A RAT, WE CAUGHT SOME
	Kunstverein, Bielefeld	AIR, group show in a book by
2010	Jetzt! Junge Malerei in Deutschland,	MÉLANGE, Art Düsseldorf, Markus
every so often (with Anna Virnich),	Kunstmuseum Bonn	Lüttgen, Booth G09
DREI Raum, Cologne	Jetzt! Junge Malerei in Deutschland,	ShotSpotter 2- Blurry Boundaries,
	Museum Wiesbaden	Kosmetiksalon Babette, Berlin
	Jetzt! Junge Malerei in Deutschland,	face my boost by your ShotSpotter,
SELECTED GROUP SHOWS	Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz -	Hardspace, Basel
	Museum Gunzenhauser	
	Zwei Alter: Jung, Crone Side, Berlin	2017
2020	Box 4, Melange, Cologne	BOILER ROOM, Basis projectspace,
small is beautiful, Mai 36, Zurich	STRABAG Artaward, STRABAG	Frankfurt
Slow And Everywhere Like Breath,	Kunstforum, Vienna	Your Figure In The Carpet, Zero Fold,
Markus Lüttgen, Düsseldorf	Köln um halb acht, Temporary	Cologne
Jetzt! Junge Malerei in Deutschland,	Gallery, Cologne	CREATING SPACE, BMW Stiftung,
Deichtorhallen, Hamburg		Berlin
Netzwerke, Galerie Crone, Vienna	2018	
	Benefit Auction Exhibition, NAK	2016
	Neuer Aachener Kunstverein,	Benefit Auction Exhibition, NAK

Neuer Aachener Kunstverein,
Aachen
micro celebrities (commissioned by
Marcel Hiller), Fiebach Minninger,
Cologne

2015

o.T. (ohne Titel), Thermen am
Viehmarkt, Trier
o.T. (ohne Titel), Arp Museum,
Rolandseck
CORRAXOMA (with Thomas
Musehold) curated by Arne Reimann,
Koal, Berlin

2014

Cologne at half past seven,
Temporary Gallery, Cologne
Benefit Auction Exhibition, NAK
Neuer Aachener Kunstverein,

Aachen

Printing Matters, Graphik Kabinett, Galerie der Stadt Backnang Cristallo, RECEPTION, Berlin

2013

Kunst jetzt: Ida Gerhardi Preis 2013, Städtische Galerie, Lüdenscheid Corridor Plateau III, Galerie DREI, Cologne

2012

la lucidezza, RECEPTION, Berlin Benefit Auction Exhibition, NAK Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen

2011

Jahresgaben, Kunstverein Braunschweig Schützenfest Meisterschüler. Raumlabor, Braunschweig Nomadische Unschärfen, Temporary Gallery, Cologne

2010

walls feel the love, Raum Kalk, Cologne

2008

Our gift to the world, Kunstklub Berlin

2007

Dross, Galerie der HBK, Braunschweig

2005

Plattform #2, Kunstverein Hannover

MARKUS SAILE

AWARDS & RESIDENCIES	SELECTED PUBLICATIONS	Museum Rolandseck, Cologne:
		Salonverlag 2015
2020	2019	
Stiftung Kunstfonds	Now! Painting in Germany today,	2013
	exhcat., Kunstmuseum Bonn,	Markus Saile: non travail , Text:
2019	Museum Wisebaden, Museum	Christoph Schreier (germ./engl.), ed.
STRABAG Artaward International	Gunzenhauser Chemnitz,	by Kunstverein Sprinhornhof und
(award of recognition)	Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Text:	RECEPTION, Berlin, Berlin: Distanz
	Susanne Titz (germ. / engl.), ed. by	Verlag 2013
2018	Stephan Berg, Alexander Klar,	Corridor Plateau III, ed. by Galerie
CCA Andratx	Frédéric Bußmann, Munich: Hirmer	DREI, Köln , Cologne: DREI 2013
2014		
Künstlerhaus Schloss Balmoral	2019	2011
Runstiemaus Schloss Balmoral	Markus Saile:Time Batteries, Text:	Markus Saile: Cliffhanger , Text: Ilka
2012	Baptist Ohrtmann, ed. by Markus	Becker (germ./engl.), ed. by
2013	Saile, Cologne: Strzlecki Books 2019	Hubertus von Amelunxen
Kunststiftung NRW, Junge Szene		
2007 2011	2015	2010
2007-2011	o.T. (ohne Titel), Text: Arne Reimann	every so often (Markus Saile, Anna
Studienstiftung des deutschen	(germ.), ed. by Oliver Kornhoff, Arp	Virnich, Text: Dennis Hochköppeler
Volkes		

(germ.) , ed. by DREI Raum für Gegenwartskunst, Cologne

PUBLISHING

2018

Field of Codes, Texte: Ilka Becker, Hans-Christian Dany, Sarah Kolb, Fiona McGovern, Markus Saile, Kerstin Stakemeier, Marcus Steinweg (germ.), ed. by Markus Saile, Ilka Becker, Marcel Hiller, Katrin Mayer, Cologne: PiK 2018