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, Untitled 2022, oil on wood, 63x52 cm Euro 5000 tax included



Markus Saile, Untitled 2022, oil on wood, 62x50 cm Euro 5000 tax included



Markus Saile, Untitled 2022, oil on wood, 38x50 cm Euro 3800 tax included



Markus Saile, Untitled 2022, oil on wood, 123x98 cm Euro 9500 tax included



Markus Saile, Pipe #31 2022, oil on wood, 145x13 cm Euro 6500 tax included



Markus Saile, Untitled, 2022 oil on wood, 120x150 cm 12.000 tax included



Markus Saile, Untitled 2022, oil on wood, 47x44 cm Euro 4200 tax included



Markus Saile, Untitled, 2022 oil on wood, 85x92 cm 8.000 tax 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)



Markus Saile, scala, A+B Gallery, Brescia, 2022



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Markus Saile, scala, A+B Gallery, Brescia, 2022



Markus Saile, scala, A+B Gallery, Brescia, 2022



Markus Saile, Suspension of (dis)belief, Markus Lüttgen Galerie, Zurich, 2021



Markus Saile, Suspension of (dis)belief, Markus Lü ttgen Galerie, Zurich, 2021



Markus Saile, Suspension of (dis)belief, Markus Lüttgen Galerie, Zurich, 2021

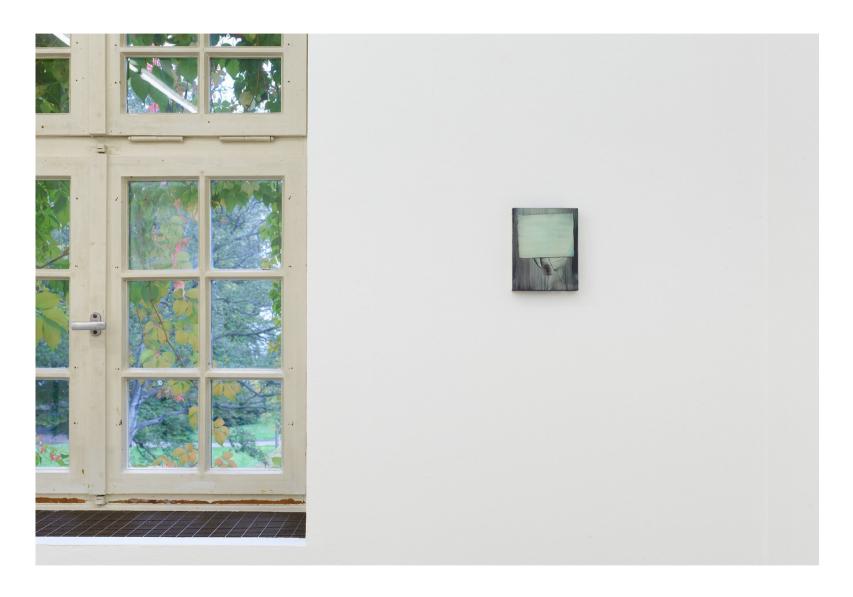


Markus Saile, Suspension of (dis)belief, Markus Lüttgen Galerie, Zurich, 2021





Markus Saile, Suspension of (dis)belief, Markus Lü ttgen Galerie, Zurich, 2021



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



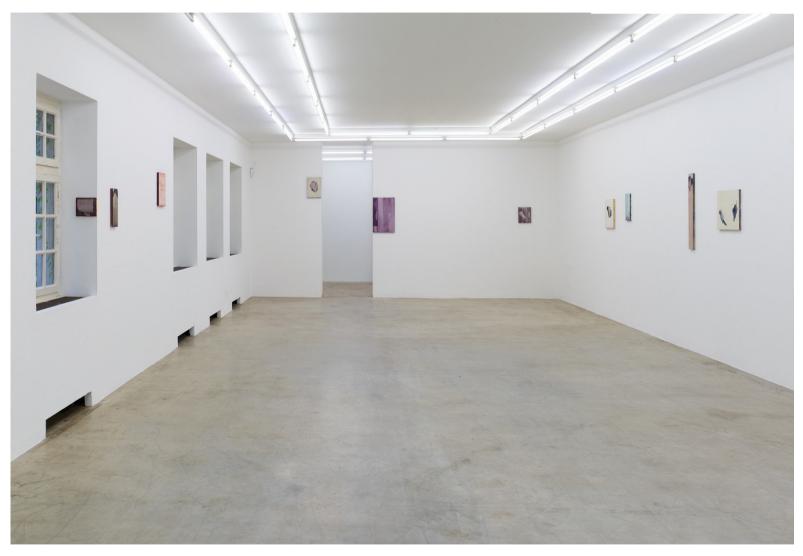
Markus Saile, separate | related (TWODO Collection), NAK, Aachen, 2020



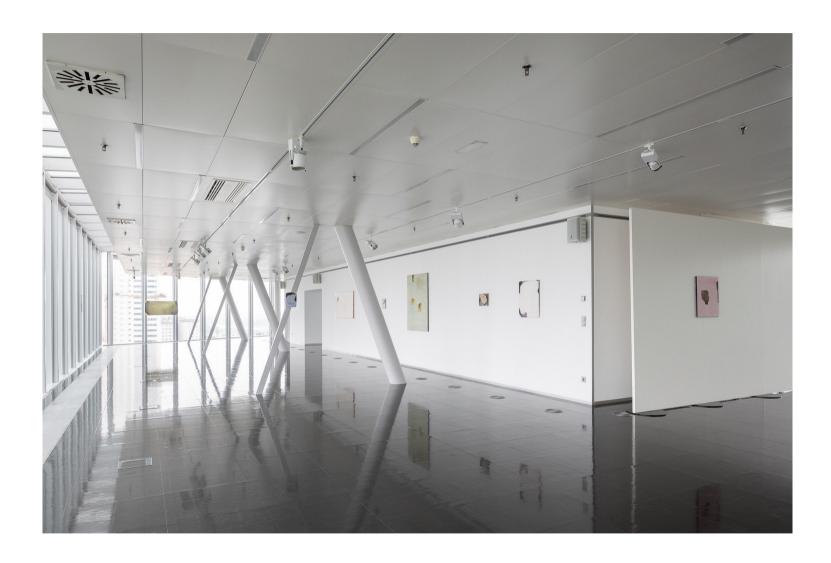
Markus Saile, separate | related (TWODO Collection), NAK, Aachen, 2020



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



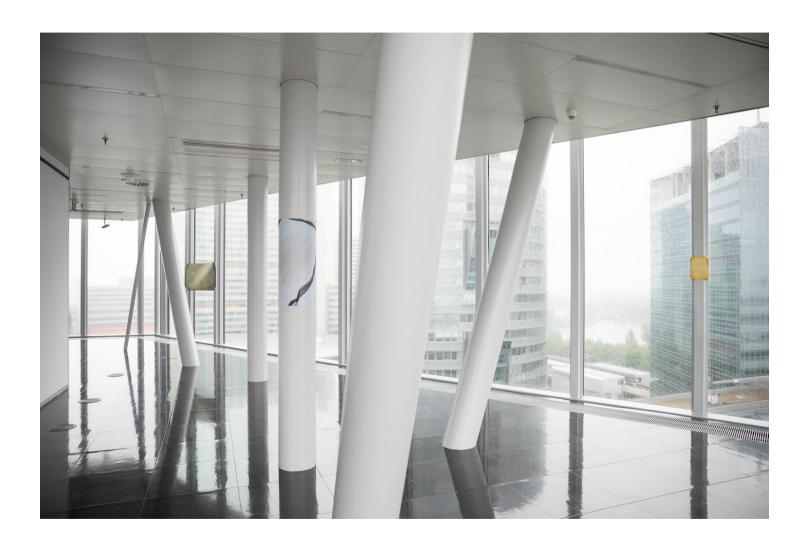
Markus Saile, separate | related (TWODO Collection), NAK, Aachen, 2020



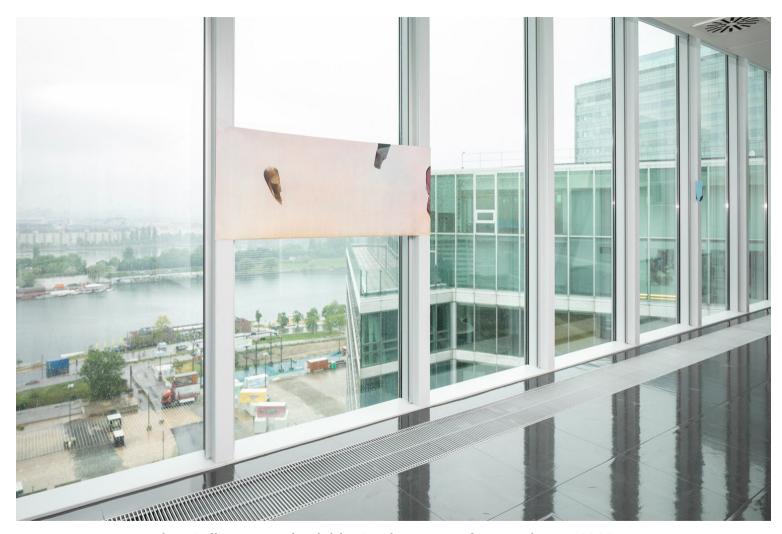
Markus Saile, Magnetic Fields, Strabag, Kunstforum, Vienna, 2020



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



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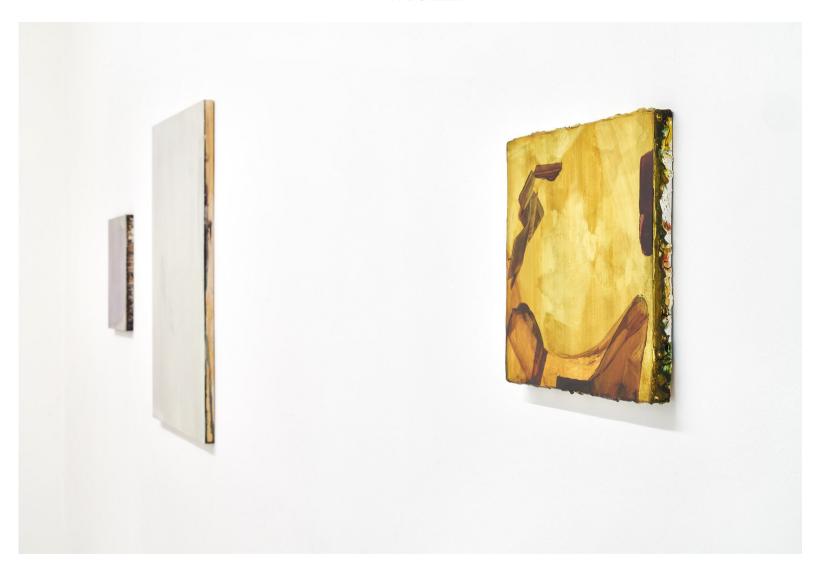
Markus Saile, Magnetic Fields, Strabag, Kunstforum, Vienna, 2020



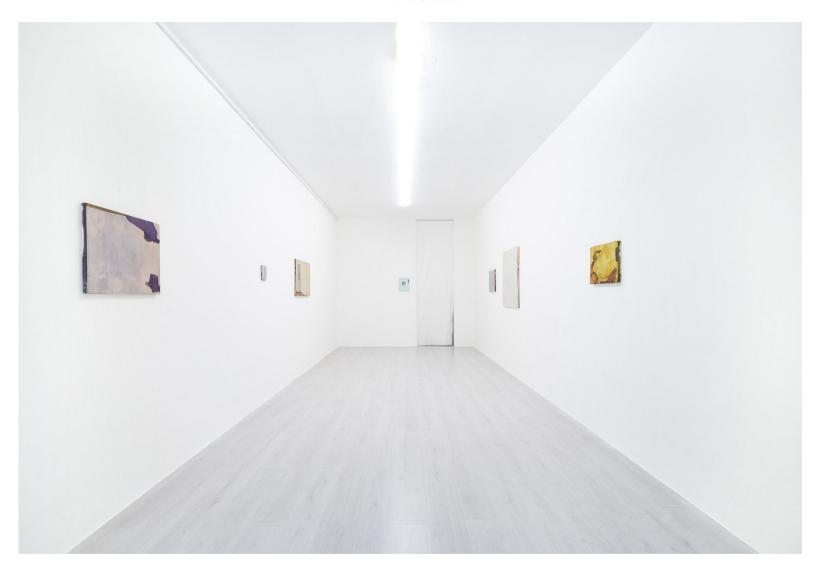
Markus Saile, Magnetic Fields, Strabag, Kunstforum, Vienna, 2020



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



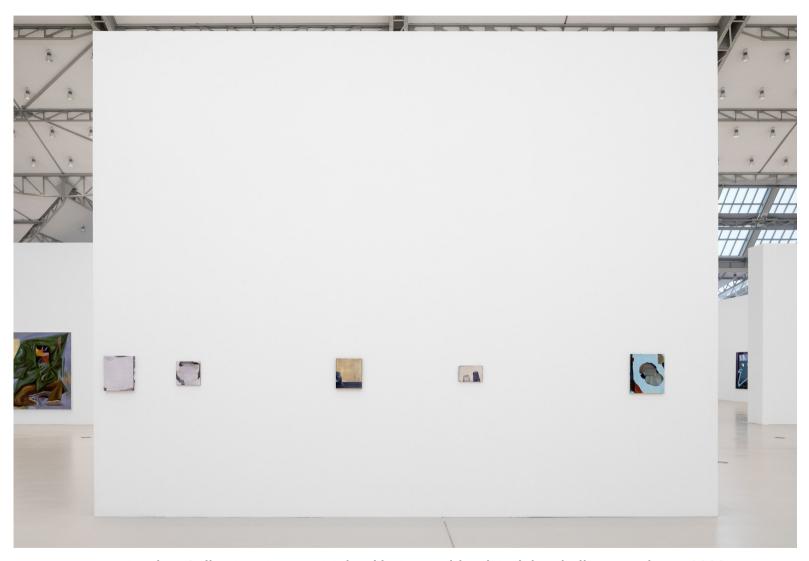
Markus Saile, FINALI SONO INIZI, A+B Gallery, Brescia, 2019



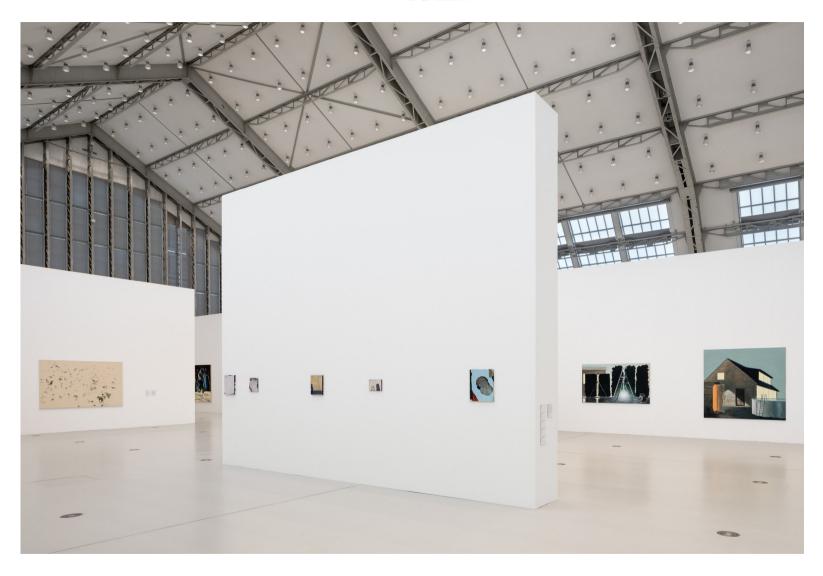
Markus Saile, FINALI SONO INIZI, A+B Gallery, Brescia, 2019



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, Van exhibition, Köln, 2020



Markus Saile, Van exhibition, Köln, 2020

teal, olive, russet, and violet, or somber

grays rimed with ice. Though the

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"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).

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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	
		2019
	SOLO EXHIBITIONS	FINALI SONO INIZI, A+B Gallery,
		Brescia, Italy
	Upcoming , June 2022	Das und gleicht dem Chamäleon,
	Mai 36 Galerie, Zurich (CH)	Galerie Markus Lüttgen, Düsseldorf
		2017
	2021	time is the longest distance (with
		Talisa Lallai), Galerie Nathalie
	Suspension of (dis)belief , Markus	Halgand, Vienna
	Lüttgen, Düsseldorf	
		2014
	2020	Magere Zeiten, RECEPTION, Berlin
	separate related (cat.), NAK Neuer	
Markus Saile was born in Stuttgart (1981). He lives and works in Cologne and is the co-founder and curator at PiK Deutz in Cologne (2014-2018).	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	Slow And Everywhere Like Breath,	Kunstforum, Vienna
Springhornhof	Markus Lüttgen, Düsseldorf	Köln um halb acht, Temporary
	Jetzt! Junge Malerei in Deutschland,	Gallery, Cologne
2012	Deichtorhallen, Hamburg	
Schichtwechsel, RECEPTION, Berlin	Netzwerke, Galerie Crone, Vienna	2018
Markus Saile, Ringstube, Mainz		Benefit Auction Exhibition, NAK
		Neuer Aachener Kunstverein,
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

Your Figure In The Carpet, Zero Fold,	Koal, Berlin	Benefit Auction Exhibition, NAK
Cologne		Neuer Aachener Kunstverein,
CREATING SPACE, BMW Stiftung,	2014	Aachen
Berlin	Cologne at half past seven,	
	Temporary Gallery, Cologne	2011
2016	Benefit Auction Exhibition, NAK	Jahresgaben, Kunstverein
Benefit Auction Exhibition, NAK	Neuer Aachener Kunstverein,	Braunschweig
Neuer Aachener Kunstverein,	Aachen	Schützenfest Meisterschüler,
Aachen	Printing Matters, Graphik Kabinett,	Raumlabor, Braunschweig
micro celebrities (commissioned by	Galerie der Stadt Backnang	Nomadische Unschärfen, Temporary
Marcel Hiller), Fiebach Minninger,	Cristallo, RECEPTION, Berlin	Gallery, Cologne
Cologne		
	2013	2010
2015	Kunst jetzt: Ida Gerhardi Preis 2013,	walls feel the love, Raum Kalk,
o.T. (ohne Titel), Thermen am	Städtische Galerie, Lüdenscheid	Cologne
Viehmarkt, Trier	Corridor Plateau III, Galerie DREI,	
o.T. (ohne Titel), Arp Museum,	Cologne	2008
Rolandseck		Our gift to the world, Kunstklub
CORRAXOMA (with Thomas	2012	Berlin
Musehold) curated by Arne Reimann,	la lucidezza, RECEPTION, Berlin	

2007		Susanne Titz (germ. / engl.), ed. by
Dross, Galerie der HBK,	2014	Stephan Berg, Alexander Klar,
Braunschweig	Künstlerhaus Schloss Balmoral	Frédéric Bußmann, Munich: Hirmer
2005	2013	2019
Plattform #2, Kunstverein Hannover	Kunststiftung NRW, Junge Szene	Markus Saile:Time Batteries, Text:
		Baptist Ohrtmann, ed. by Markus
	2007-2011	Saile, Cologne: Strzlecki Books 2019
	Studienstiftung des deutschen	
AWARDS & RESIDENCIES	Volkes	2015
		o.T. (ohne Titel), Text: Arne Reimann
2020		(germ.), ed. by Oliver Kornhoff, Arp
Stiftung Kunstfonds	SELECTED PUBLICATIONS	Museum Rolandseck, Cologne:
		Salonverlag 2015
2019	2019	
STRABAG Artaward International	Now! Painting in Germany today,	2013
(award of recognition)	exhcat., Kunstmuseum Bonn,	Markus Saile: non travail , Text:
	Museum Wisebaden, Museum	Christoph Schreier (germ./engl.), ed.
2018	Gunzenhauser Chemnitz,	by Kunstverein Sprinhornhof und
CCA Andratx	Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Text:	RECEPTION, Berlin, Berlin: Distanz

Verlag 2013

Corridor Plateau III, ed. by Galerie DREI, Köln , Cologne: DREI 2013

2011

Markus Saile: Cliffhanger , Text: Ilka Becker (germ./engl.), ed. by

Hubertus von Amelunxen

2010

every so often (Markus Saile, Anna Virnich, Text: Dennis Hochköppeler (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