

ARTFORUM

BERLIN

Bernard Piffaretti

KLEMM'S
Prinzessinnenstr. 29
March 8–April 18

Bernard Piffaretti's painting run counter to any unity of style while simultaneously pursuing a consistent artistic strategy. This productive contradiction applies not only to his individual paintings or exhibitions but also to his work as a whole, as can be observed in his third solo show at Klemm's. In 1986, Piffaretti made the decision to divide each of his canvases into halves with a narrow strip of paint. On one side, he develops an abstract composition with rapid strokes, alla prima, often in high-contrast color. Once complete, he executes the same motif, with precision and in a light hand, on the other half. Thus, a double with minimal differences—varying drip traces, for example, or a slightly divergent line—emerges. Piffaretti sometimes begins an image on the right side, at other times on the left; the viewer is left unsure which half is the original and which is the copy. Such strategic play results in self-plagiarism, as interesting synoptic juxtapositions and distinct dynamics and rhythms exceeding the original motif unfold.

The ever-present principle of repetition in Piffaretti's work opens it up to a broad pluralism of style. The artist practically reinvents himself from painting to painting, and were one to judge by formal attributes alone, it would be impossible to say whether a canvas originated in the '80s, '90s, 2000s, or today. This approach is reflected in the title and concept of the current exhibition: In "Kontinuum" (Continuum), Piffaretti presents twelve paintings from 2018, one from each month, and has hung them chronologically. As a result of his practice of doubling, each work rests in a way within itself and forms a kind of short circuit, making them all similar and different at the same time. Their continuum, therefore, is that of aesthetic simultaneity, a here and now of the discontinuous.

Translated from German by Diana Reese.

—Jens Asthoff