

GAGOSIAN



Katharina Grosse talks about painting in two dimensions and three

Paul Laster



Although Katharina Grosse's reputation rests on projects presented at major museums and biennials around the world, she's primarily known in NYC for public artworks like last summer's vibrantly painted building in Rockaway and 2013's outdoor installation of wildly hued angular blocks at Brooklyn's MetroTech Center. Both speak to Grosse's signature approach of creating colorful 2-D compositions out of 3-D forms. Her New York solo debut at Chelsea's Gagosian Gallery features more of the same, along with large-scale gestural canvases. Speaking from her Berlin studio, Grosse weighs in on her affinity for Renaissance frescoes and the similarities between painting and surfing.

Do you consider yourself a painter, a sculptor or an installation artist?

I'm a painter. I'm interested in the space generated by the painted image and how it can appear in any kind of existing field, be it architecture or the mundane situations of everyday life. For me, painting isn't restricted to a canvas or a wall.

How does working in your studio differ from working outdoors?

When I work in public, I only have a certain amount of time and space. I work for however long it takes to finish the project. When I work on canvases in my studio, though, I can stop and come back after a month, say. It's more autonomous.

For your most recent public artwork in Rockaway, you painted an abandoned building at Fort Tilden, including the sand around it. What was your biggest challenge while creating it?

The most difficult part was dealing with the relationship between the building, the beach and the sky. I wanted the painting to move over different surfaces and dilute the boundaries between them.

You used a lot of orange and magenta for the piece. Was that meant to match the sky at sunset?

You could associate it with that. On the other hand, it's not a rendering of a sunset, because the magenta I used was very artificial. So it would be better to say the painting depicts an image—the setting sun—and also disrupts it. But it was more about referencing the history of abstract painting.

Speaking of which, your new paintings remind me of the Abstract Expressionists. Were any of them an influence?

I recently saw Jackson Pollock's Blue Poles and it was amazing. But there's no single artist that I find important. Renaissance frescoes are interesting to me. So is the way that soccer players divide the playing field. I make no distinction between them.

You're also a surfer. Does that affect your work?

A little bit. Whether you're surfing or painting, the situation changes from one minute to the next. It's necessary to adapt to the moment by acting and thinking at the same time.