

Struan Teague - "Spirit Level"

13 June - 12 July 2025

Opening 12 June 2025, 6-8pm

"Painting", "picture", and accordingly "to paint" – none of these terms seem fully suitable when it comes to describing the work of Struan Teague (without denying, of course, that since the 20th century the categorical definition of an artwork has often been called into question, while various forms of boundary-crossing have come to the fore). His works lack the element of a targeted act of covering a surface with color. Yet "to paint" originally means staining and marking – and the etymology of the German word *malen* includes references to a dark, impure hue, even to dirt (Wolfgang Pfeifer et al., *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Deutschen*, 1993). In this sense, Teague's works operate outside the established discourses of painting, whether figurative or non-representational. They lead not to an origin, but to an unresolved condition. However, traces that appear to have emerged by themselves, the suggestion of a fleeting residue, the sudden appearance of something that can be perceived but not named – these all arise from a methodical process. The framework for this process includes the use of unprimed canvas (in various grades), the choice of formats that range from quite large to quite small (always rectangular, either vertically or horizontally, in keeping with convention), the combination of various painting materials in a single work (e.g., pencil, oil, pigment, and acrylic), the avoidance of bright colors, and the often clear distinction between "figure" and "ground". The coloration of the surface with muted tones creates an atmospheric space for the emergence of indeterminate signs.

Adhering to the rectangular format activates the familiar window metaphor. Through the window, a fragment of a larger context is visible, so it appears. Yet all markings are arranged in such a way – both in relation to each other and to the boundaries of the pictorial field – that a balanced constellation emerges (in terms of color relationships, positions, and the interrelation of markings). Paradoxically, a strong (albeit not immediately obvious) compositional impulse conditions the ephemeral appearance of these works. If they present a precarious state before or after painting, they do so through the means of relational painting. How far can painting go in its approach to phenomenal uncertainty without succumbing to it? The answer to this question determines the radicality with which something unseen is brought into appearance.

German text by Ulrich Loock, 15 March 2025

English translation by Dóra Eötvös, 6 May 2025