



18.01.29 - SUMMERTIME, 2018
Oil on canvas, 190 x 190 cm





Anne Pontégnie

2009
2019

Thinking in Paint



09.06.12, 2009
Oil on canvas, 12 x 25 cm

YVES ZURSTRASSEN – FREE

Yves Zurstrassen's oeuvre is at once clear and baffling. His language is that of an abstraction that combines gesture and pattern, based on the formal processes that define its composition. The result is painting that is direct, lively and legible, but that evades us at the same time as it manifests itself.

Zurstrassen belongs to a generation of painters, on both sides of the Atlantic, who, in the late 1970s, were able to free themselves from the modernist constraint of radical invention for perhaps more modest, yet freer projects. Once the idea of the tabula rasa was discarded, the visual inventions of the 20th century became accessible in order to elaborate a singular language that went beyond schools, styles or chapels. Günther Förg, Bernard

Frize or Christian Bonnefoi in Europe, and Terry Winters, David Reed, Jonathan Lasker or Philip Taaffe in the United States, are just some of the artists of Zurstrassen's generation who, like him, have linked process and expression, pattern and gesture, concept and form.

Perhaps because he is self-taught, perhaps because he has always lived far from the main centres of creation, Yves Zurstrassen has preserved an independence that has allowed him to develop an oeuvre that never reads better than from the manner in which it progresses. The decade that preceded 2019 expresses this by way of extensive series of works, interrupted by moments of dropping out, encompassing the necessary breathing time before every new invention.



He confides that he never truly looks at a landscape and does not draw his inspiration from nature. Even more, the relations he enjoys with reality to construct his works do not fundamentally imply a relationship with a world exogenous to painting. In his work, everything comes from the 'place of painting', from its domain. It is here that he engages in dialogues with reality. 'I mainly live between the four walls of my studio. This is where I initiate and reinstate my vision, my aesthetic project. I first have to engender a space, understand its breathing, find its pace.' Yves Zurstrassen's constant companions are the creations of other painters and of musicians. And if there is a 'reality', it is not

that of primary nature, but that of 'another nature', a second nature that is as animated as nature itself. This reality is art, more particularly abstract art, which enjoys every freedom and rids itself of every symbolism. Yves uses these freedoms to the point of destabilizing amateurs, experts and critics alike. They foil habits and patterns and even thwart the creator himself. Because the form is the essence, the 'absolute real', it distances the painter's oeuvre from all semblance of formalism.



Here, I think of an article on poetry by Marina Tsvetaeva. She writes, 'How could I, a poet, i.e., an essential being, be seduced by the form? If the essence seduces me, the form will come of its own accord. And it comes. And it will continue coming, I am sure. The form is commanded by a given essential and I pick it up by ear, syllable after syllable. Sculpting a form before filling it in! But come on, this is not a plaster mould. No, I am seduced by the essence, and then I incarnate it. This is what being a poet is. And I will incarnate it as essentially as possible (that is a problem of form). The essence is indeed the form — a child cannot be born as another.'¹

I believe that Yves Zurstrassen's oeuvre, and the conception that is inherent to it, are close to Marina Tsvetaeva's approach. He feels and builds an essential relationship with the world, which he expresses in painting. And, as Marina Tsvetaeva says, 'If the essence seduces me, the form will come of its own accord. And it comes. And it will continue to come...' Yves Zurstrassen's investigations are founded on a similar experience. It is born from the painter himself, and its essential principle, as well as its development, are primarily

