

## Pressrelease

### Jens Stittgen

#### Figuration / Abstraction

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Powerful, expressive and dynamic and yet at the same time hushed, tentative and reserved – these opposite poles are straddled in the latest paintings by Jens Stittgen, on view at Galerie m since 18 February.

Born in Karlsruhe in 1956, the artist has consistently pursued a single motif throughout the course of his career: the human figure. The current pictures, created during the last three years, often show figures in paired constellations, in relationship to one or several others.

The figures emerge as if by-products of the act of painting itself, from colors applied forcefully and dynamically either with a brush or directly with the fingers and heel of the bare hand. In the traces left behind by paint smeared and spread over and over again in multiple layers, in a seeming chaos of interpenetrating lines and surfaces, fragments of human bodies evolve. Instead of perceiving them as the outer forms of human beings, however, we instead have the impression of viewing the embodiment of inner emotional states, or the essence of the figures' relationships with one another. The lines, surfaces and colors, such as muddy sallow green, deep blood red, dull yellow, orange and flesh tones, do not depict outward human appearances, but instead express inner moods, transforming the psychophysical state of the figures and their interrelationships. The figures are charged with an aggressive tension, evoking struggle and injury, remoteness and closeness, resistance and convergence.

In contrast to these works, which seem to emerge from an energetic, agitated process of color and gesture, from an almost defiant application of paint, other images in the exhibit exude an impression of serene reduction, limited to a few gently controlled lines and colors, with sparingly applied accents defining bodies in space. In this reduction of the painting process, the expression of the immaterial, incorporeal inner being of the figures and their relationships is concentrated and condensed even more strongly.

The works of Jens Stittgen evoke a tireless attempt to try to get hold of inner emotional processes and pin them down through painting. Since these can never truly be grasped, however, the work of trying to capture them in paint and the open-ended quest for inner truth must repeatedly be taken up anew, ultimately leaving the images just as open and unresolved.