

Ralph van Meijgaard

Studio-talk:

It's a kind of mental metabolism painting

22. June 2014

H.Th. (Heyer Thurnheer)

We sit here in front of your actual painting called 'Escalator' that you worked on the first half of 2014. It appears as if the different items in the painting are linked to each other in a multi-layered interaction...

R. M. (Ralph van Meijgaard)

...It's like there was a key to it, maybe not posed as a riddle to be solved but perhaps as open resource for the spectator to invent his own stories, yes.....

H.Th. : *In this painting there are no abstracted figures anymore like in your early paintings. One can observe geometric formations tending to abstract patterns, objects and a sort of symbols in static position and slow movements towards up and down. They act or operate with repetition and differentiation of form, counter-form and transformation. Positioning, size, colour, density of colour and the space-, relation- and perhaps also meaning- and open resource-setting, seem to activate the spectator's interpretation.*

R. M. : ...Well, it's about thinking processes.

H.Th. : *These different items and pictograms in your painting, do you develop them individually for every new painting you work on?*

R. M. : No, most items I use in my painting are kind of familiar to me. They are not totally different in every new painting. It's more like something I have developed over the years and during different painting periods. An invention

of forms which I then use again in new paintings. So I use forms which I have developed in paintings before, while at the same time I develop and transform a new irrational inventory of pictograms.

H.Th. : *A pictogram or symbol always points to a meaning..... A symbol indicates something. A symbol stands for itself as well as for something else that it represents. These painted items appear to be minimal signs without meaning, but at the same time they ask for identification. As signs, as symbols that provoke further inquiry.*

R. M. : Yes, in my paintings, a symbol opens up a resource of possible meanings and interpretation. Often I distil my forms from simple every day objects like an ice-cream cone or whatever. By reducing simple every day objects and forms to symbols and pictogram-like shapes, I charge them with a potential for evoking meaning and interpretation.

H.Th. : *This, your abstract painting, is worked out in a very precise manner, and appears to be very much focussed on the visual distinction that points to the human skill of observing, thinking and mind-forming. Are you a spectator while painting?*

R. M. : Well, as a painter I'm a spectator, too. As a human being I like to give helpful instructions when necessary. My paintings always had this impact of instruction. They are like modelled miniatures of the world, of an imaginary discourse trying to understand the world.

H.Th. : *And this attitude of trying to understand is focused on yourself as well as on the human being in general, as spectator. Right!?*

R. M. : I try to create something that is helpful in the field of understanding, reflection, interpretation, thinking, shaping society... Not just as an overdone romantic notion... of course art hints at life and the task to do something that stirs the senses of the spectator. There must be an interaction between the painting and the spec-

tator and I hope I can invite audience to look at my paintings engaged and carefully. When one looks at it, something happens, I hope. It's a proposal. If one connects with it, one might find something interesting for one's own mind.

H.Th. : *Your paintings are done step by step in a ongoing process. First you make a sketch, or perhaps several sketches that you then transform in different sessions into its final outlines. And it ends with the choice of the colours which are then again put on canvas, layer by layer.....*

R.M. : Yes, my painting is the result of a long-term evolutionary process. Sometimes I have to sleep on it to get the next step in developing my paintings. I can't paint in singular sessions. It is a process in time I have to go about. I often have to wait and reflect carefully about what is

already there on the canvas before getting sufficient focus for the next move. Yes, it's a kind of working it out step by step during a longer period of time. On "Escalator" I worked for half a year. Of course, sometimes I also work parallel on different paintings...and then sometimes while working on one painting, it happens, that I know at once how to continue with the other one. I can't force it, I follow the painting's process, its own rhythm, dynamics and laws. It's a kind of "mental metabolism painting"....