

which, however, call for the ordering of austere sign vehicles and logical referencing.

His most recent works have emerged from the use of paper. First it is used to produce models, which are then translated into rectangular coloured metal surfaces that are only slightly bent, leading to startling three-dimensional effects. The sheets, in contrapuntal arrangements, define completely paths so Minimalist that they are reminiscent of solutions featured by the American artists Carl Andre and Donald Judd.

In the most recent works paper has become a means to achieve greater lightness in the rendering of specific landscape details. An exceptional experiment of Maierhofer's, with which he has left behind the universe of abstraction for the first time to devote himself to Nature study, inspired by the Cottian Alps - a mountain range dominated by the peak of Monviso. Observing that Alpine peak from his holiday home, the artist recorded in daily sessions the changes caused by light and weather, which induced him to reproduce those powerful images of complex colouration and seeming changes in volume wrought by atmospheric forces - snow, clouds, mist and rain. The manifold greens of the forests, the precision of the blacks and greys of the rocks, the airy modulation of the whites of the snow-capped peak recur both in brushstrokes layered in aqueous glazes and in lines drawn in ink with astringent clarity. The three-dimensional quality which Maierhofer gives to his paper is stunning. He moistens fibrous cardboard, manipulates, dries and paints it with fluidity and lightness, transforming it into mass with volume. By rolling it out, he creates the effect of hollows and undulating planes; he folds it into a semblance of caves, crevasses and abysses, extends it to define the extreme steepness of summits. To enhance the lowering, craggy effect,

with other papers he adds cut-outs and irregular appliqués to the area underneath, thus interrupting the vast sweep of the mountain vista: notched, white shapes imitate banks of clouds enveloping the lower slopes from which the vast peak emerges in brilliant colours.

It is interesting to note how the experiments with paper combine both the Minimalist geometric configuration and mountain landscapes. The extreme discrepancy between the two visual languages seems to have been reconciled in the mass of the mountain range condensing into a peak, a summit, as if obeying the absolutist dictates of triangular form. It is Maierhofer himself who links the two discrepant forms of expression - transgressing the boundary to the sky with mutable colours and immersing himself in the turbulent cloud formations seem to transport him beyond the visible, into a sphere infused with mysticism. His angels, plunged in golden yellow in the best medieval tradition, are merely suggested rather than defined by minute cracks, caesurae virtually invisible on the surface of brooches which are slightly domed and wavy, their borders lively and curvy, thus recalling angel wings set in motion by a fleeting breath of air but firmly held in place by the Minimalist composition.

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