

ELISABET NORSENG
“ DOUZE SANS DOUZE”
The 144 series

Technical specification:

144 pictures, each 66 x 103 cm

Technique: Aquarelle Windsor and Newton on Arches paper

Project description:

One of my later projects is a huge series of 144 pictures, all based on the same 12 circles; 3 + 3 vertically placed, repeated twice. The position and colour for each of the 12 circles never changes. All 12, however, never appear simultaneously. That makes room for various and changing inner relations and movements, within this strict and limited framework.

I always aim at that kind of openness in my works, a sort of potentiality, stating that things are not fixed once and for all, but might be otherwise. To obtain this, a number of means are taken into use:

The reasons and answers behind omissions of circles are not given. Neither is the logic of the underlying “grid” system. Any such explication would have fixed the circles on position. Without answers, score sheets or logic rules, one becomes more aware that this picture could have been another one or otherwise, that even if placements feels right, other possibilities could have been found or could have worked as well. The picture is left open to its potentiality. The picture is open to be looked upon in different ways, and it does changes accordingly.

Open pictures like those better reflect their creation process, since elements have been left where they talk to each other, and not where a system has dictated it to be, although that might seem more comprehensible. These specific sites of conditional reciprocity are not constructed or chosen, but rather found or discovered during the creation process: Their placings are not arbitrary, but evaluated with utmost care. The effort in making all those precise circles in watercolour on paper, points to this process. Slight variations in shades of colour further underlines it, but even becomes part in the process of creating and evaluation of contextual interactions.

Since the circles seem to be placed by intention, and an evident answer is not at hand, one starts to search for an explanation. One considers various models of relations and groupings, only to find that the pictures are made to take multiple and complex relations into account, leaving you with several and simultaneously valid solutions. One is led to reflect upon how complex, rich and volatile relations really are, generally speaking.

Simultaneously it is shown how everything makes sense each to the other, creates something new together in their actual context; how things comes into being by mutual relations.

A fundamental motion in the pictures lies in the meeting between the eyes of the beholder and the openness of the pictures, which in turn might supply insight into the received image itself.

There is also constant encounter between the open and the explicit, the random and the defined: Things are at the same time by chance and not by chance, like the act of creation. That something is not subject to an evident logic or order does not mean it is accidental. By these encounters one is constantly transported into new rooms, other possible places are suggested, and the potentiality of the picture is again opened.

The interaction viewer-picture is reinforced by the impact of circle omissions: Things are intentionally left a bit out of balance, a little unstable, on the move: It causes motion and change, and even more interpretational varieties, through the many volatile and transient relations created. My project is not geometry, which can easily be done by anyone. By intent, I make my pictures somewhat erroneous to create movement and life. The perfect stays still.

Paradoxically, these pictures which can look different and are in constant motion, have got a very concentrated and precise, almost silent nature. The circles are rigorously performed with a high degree of precision and focus. The creation process in itself, already part of the picture, requires both focus and openness of mind. I also always work on the basis of quiet and low-voiced means; quite under-represented in these days of violent cultural imperialism. And finally the underlying structure, almost degraded to raw material by omissions, still serves an important function as something overall easy to grasp and relate to. Altogether, something concentrated and quiet, which allows one to sit in on a more attentive and open level. This even makes this project an ethic one.

Elisabet Norseng

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