

RETO BOLLER

KUNSTHALLE WINTERTHUR

At a time when painting is being increasingly challenged by and filtered through other media, Reto Boller's work brings color and form off the support and into the viewer's space. Through both small-format works produced in the studio and wall paintings made on-site, Boller creates monochromatic organic forms whose tones, in reflecting the light, seep into the space they occupy. Hints of the world around are frequently intuited—landscapes, architectural elements, fluids, '70s design, or the structure of the human body—but

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paramount to the artist is that the painterly situation he intuitively enters into has an inner logic.

The first room in the Kunsthalle was occupied by two works that on first sight had little in common, but on reflection played off one another. *Klebfolie, Holz* (Contact Paper, Wood), 2005, a large-format piece made of orange adhesive film, connected wall and floor, the thin layer allowing the imperfections of the surface behind to show through. The altered perception of the classic architecture of the gallery was heightened by the temporary wall that Boller had placed behind the film, introducing a certain plasticity while simultaneously hindering access to one of the doors to the second room. Thanks to the precise placement of the piece in relation to the gallery's glass roof, the surface of the orange film reflected the light while throwing its glow into the space, and a sharp orange line was created around the plaster molding of the ceiling. In comparison with the vibrant but intractable film, the dull acrylic paint used for the flesh-color painting *Acryl, Silikon, Aluminium, Stahl* (Acrylic, Silicon, Aluminum, Steel), 2004, gave it a hermetic quality. The two breast-like forms made of silicon, as well as the paint manipulated to suggest the wrinkles and folds of skin, were no less homogeneous than the orange wall-work, forming an uneasy relationship between the attractive and the repellent.

This tension played out in other ways in the three works hung in the second room. Although in the white relief *Aluminium, Aluminiumverbundplatte, Acryl, Kunstharzlack* (Aluminum, Aluminum Composite Panel, Acrylic, Resin Lacquer), 2005, the composition of the roughly cut aluminum plates recalled art-historical precedents such as Ben Nicholson's experiments with abstraction or Matisse's collages, any echo of those works' elegance was offset by the harsh quality of the relief's seemingly makeshift construction, as well as by the jarring of the different whites of the ground and the forms. *Aluminium, Holz, Klebefolie* (Aluminum, Wood, Contact Paper), 2005, a large plywood grid bearing cellular or cloudlike shapes in aluminum also seemed to have been executed quickly and intuitively, but the awkwardness of the piece was counterbalanced by its sense of choreography—as if a magnetic field were causing the organic shapes to vibrate. The reflective layer of red film covering the reverse of each aluminum shape also introduced a delicacy into the work while giving the impression that the orange tones of the piece on the other side of the wall



Reto Boller, *Klebfolie, Holz* (Contact Paper, Wood), 2005, 36' x 25' x 11¾".

were seeping through. The final work, *Silikon, Leim, Acryl, Aluminium* (Silicon, Rabbit-Skin Glue, Acrylic, Aluminum), 2005, a white silicon shape on a sky blue ground of distemper, resembled chewing gum stretched to the point of splitting apart. Hovering between pure abstraction and concrete references to, for example, a landscape viewed from above, it conveyed a powerful sense of speed, emphasizing Boller's ability to draw the inherent characteristics out of the materials he works with in order to provoke and change perception.

—Felicity Lunn