



Mario von Lüttichau White wind and undulating nails: the dynamics of Günther Uecker's art

"Where language fails, the image begins." This statement by Uecker encapsulates the essence of a career that has spanned decades. Recurring motifs in his nail-ings, along with works made from materials such as stone, sand, earth and ash, reveal the extraordinary power of his minimalist vocabulary as a universally comprehensible language. Günther Uecker is inspiring. His art is too diverse to fit within a single category – like this characteristic, energetic, large-format field of nails. One senses movement here: a surface undulating back and forth, charged with hardness yet at the same time suffused with softness. We perceive light as an integral part of the material with which he works. The act of creation is always tangible – a particular form of aggression transferred from the artist's body to the nailed surface. Seen in this way, the nail paintings become emotional aggregates, uniting technique and spirit, matter and image. According to the artist, he was never primarily interested in technical possibilities, but has always used them as a vehicle for thought and action.

The "Weißer Wind" energy field, created in 1986, has a captivating vibrancy and presence. It is a work of power, energy and strength, imbued with contemplative beauty and accompanied by the fascinating dynamic of a gentle wave. The stillness suggested by the hard material is offset by the dynamic interaction of light and shadow. A striking visual effect with a fascination that is impossible to resist is achieved by the dense yet rhythmic arrangement of carpenter's nails hammered into the wood. Nail by nail, the shifting rhythm of direction creates an undulating sense of order. Uecker slathers the nails with the same white paint used on the picture base to create a new surface. He uses the nails to open up a three-dimensional space that extends beyond the picture's boundaries and features flowing organic structures. This work is also a versatile light object because the shadows cast by the nails – due to the changing daylight and the different viewing angles – continuously produce new, dynamic forms. Uecker has thus achieved a state of both agitation and contemplation.

Despite the solidity of his materials, his art has a unique expressiveness. He has always remained faithful to simple materials and tools in his artistic process. Uecker also adheres to the human scale, working only within the limits of what his own body can create as his first frame of reference. The complexity and multifaceted nature of Uecker's oeuvre are striking in terms of both creative process and effect. His work embodies a powerful and poetic reconciliation of apparent opposites – uniting action and contemplation, stillness and movement into a compelling and profoundly beautiful artistic whole. Nevertheless, a constant process of deconstructing harmony remains intensely perceptible in his works. They convey messages of emotional perception that reflect personal attitude.

"Paintings" such as "Weißer Wind", as well as Uecker's drawings, sculptures, installations, stage designs, costumes, books, photographs and films, present art as spiritual development, bearing witness to an artist who relentlessly seeks new opportunities and new scope for action. Uecker's nail paintings over the decades represent snapshots of an artistic and physical state of mind with a poetic energy that shifts with the viewer's perspective and the fall of light, as if beginning to breathe.

15 Günther Uecker

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“Weißer Wind”. 1986

Nails and white paint on canvas on wood.

150 × 150 × 18 cm (59 × 59 × 7 ½ in.). Titled in pencil on the reverse: „Weißer Wind”. Here signed and dated in black brush: Uecker 86. Here with the label of Galerie Michael Haas, Berlin, and the stamps of the collection R.-J. Vandevelde. [3188]

Provenance

R.-J. Vandevelde / Galerie Michael Haas, Berlin / Private Collection, Berlin (acquired in 1992 from Galerie Michael Haas)

EUR 800,000–1,200,000

USD 941,000–1,410,000



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