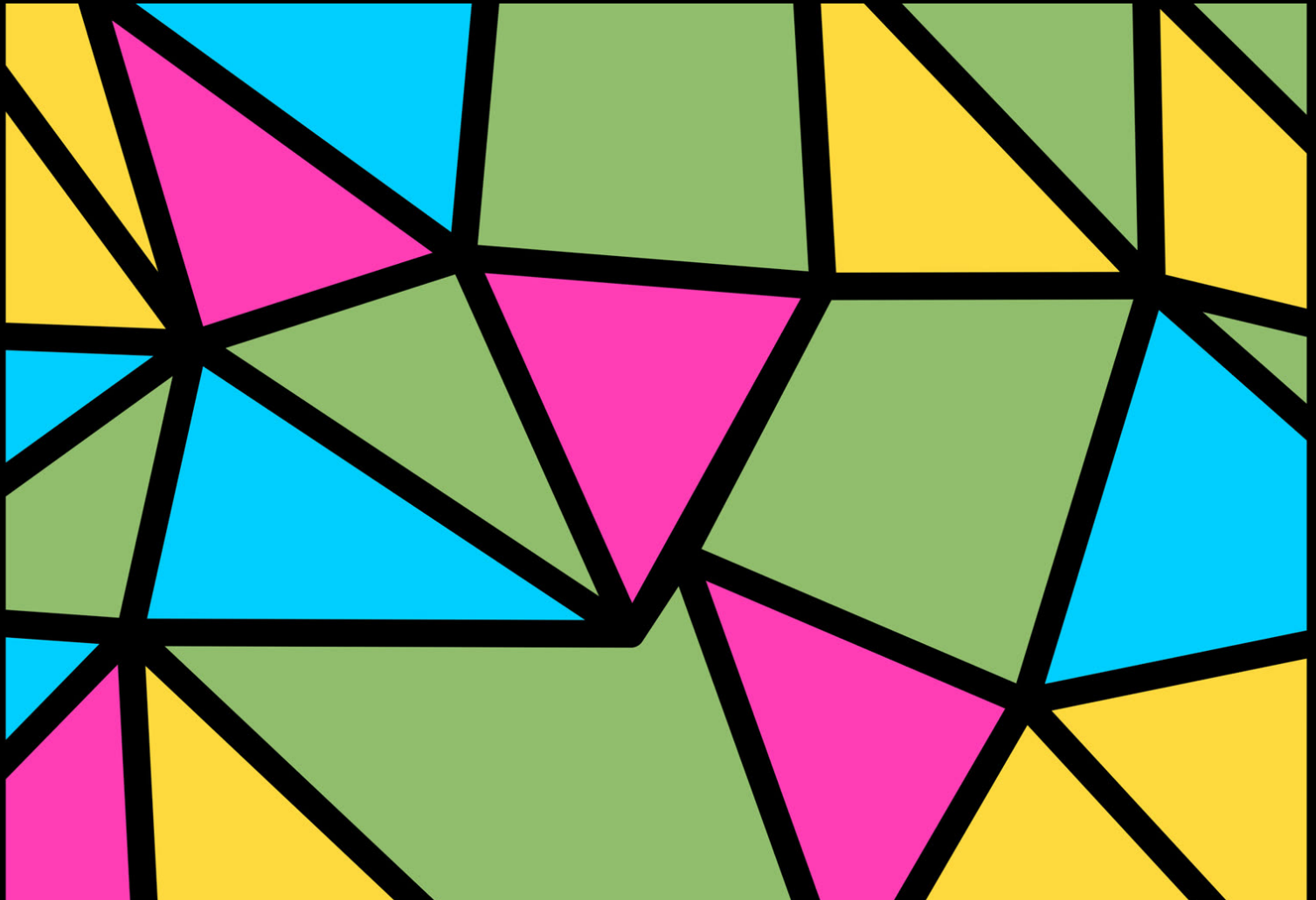




STANCE AND SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

POST-DIGITAL MODEL OF POSITING, AFTER TOBIAS POST

Looking is itself a form of positing

TOBIAS POST

Artist · Digital Light Art · Painting · Curatorial Projects

CUBE4ARTS.COM

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For me, art is always also a stance and a school of thought. So that it becomes clear what moves me, what lies behind the art and why this cannot be grasped by merely “looking at it”, I outline here the theory through which I view and describe my work.

Usually our gaze is determined by the lens of a simplified, single view of art. Such as through the eyes of a craftsman, who sees art as skill; a dealer, who sees it as sales value; an athlete, who sees it as competition; a politician, who sees it as opinion; and many others. Countless professions with their own standards of viewing come to mind at once.

Often it stops at this one linear judgement with a single dimension, which then results in a hierarchy of art as its aim. Unconsciously it quickly ends up with judgements such as “I find the picture beautiful”, “That is too flat” or “I miss the density of the work”. It is easy to recognise straight away as a classic prejudice.

For me, “in the eye of the beholder” does not mean determining a value or a verdict, but first and foremost an unconscious positing of perspectives and of a frame of meaning.

In my view, this form of judgement is naive. Of course I have such impulses in me too when I look at art. I see that as a challenge to look more closely! The maturity of looking at art grows when one has one's own frame of meaning clearly in view.

Art lies in the eye of the beholder – and precisely for that reason looking is itself a form of positing: not because everything would be arbitrary, but because every reading chooses points of reference and thereby produces meaning.

I would like to point out in advance my expanded understanding of representation. And a form of additive context which does not create overview through distance, as abstraction does through simplification, but determines the distance of visibility through enriching positing.

THE DISTINCT QUALITY OF ART

As an artist, it matters to me to stay curious and – yes – to press ahead with a certain megalomania too: to stand on the shoulders of giants with a fresh eye, and then to posit something of my own.

“Art is positing” is a central core concept for me. I learnt it almost forty years ago from my art teacher. Back then, as a pupil, I did not yet grasp its full scope.

For me, positing means awareness and reflection. Understanding visible

decisions: is it a “gestural positing”, the result of rules, or embedded in the chain of “presuppositions”?

Making decisions in art has a quality of its own – unlike research in science and the search for verifiable truth. Art is creative and generative; for me, that is a universal and powerful insight.

Every artist – consciously or unconsciously – moves within traditions, copies, deviations and the new. Artists are often shaped in their artistic position by beliefs and schools of style. One does not start from zero; one is always embedded.

My perception is that the new in art is often hard to position cleanly – and therefore gets stuck in simplified ways of looking at art. It matters to me to make the particularity of an artistic position easier to explain. What follows, therefore, are short introductions to current, problematic fields of discussion. After that I explain my own post-digital model of positing.

BACKGROUND AND THE NEED FOR A CLEAR SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

THE CHALLENGE OF DIGITAL ART

Through temporality and interactivity, digital art is often stylistically more in flux than traditional visual art. Even kinetic sculpture, video and media art, which likewise work in time, seem stylistically more stable in many cases. In digital art, with its interactivity through the viewer, style, forces and context can change continuously: the target one is talking about keeps moving.

THE ROOTS

The historical classification of contemporary digital art within traditions or visible roots, in particular, often seems less stable to me, because frames of reference shift more quickly.

Art mediation often produces a convenient sorting logic: “traditional” versus “digital”, “old” versus “young”. These are less descriptions of real practice than labels for quick communication. My interest lies beneath them: which positings are made – regardless of the medium? Where is the inner logic, where the break, where the decision?

THE CURATORIAL LOGIC OF THEMES

Curatorial framing is indispensable for art: it creates a public, context and legibility. At the same time, institutions, funding logic and communication formats create pressure towards an unambiguous narrative.

My criticism is directed not against themes, but against the moment when the artistic positing disappears behind a curatorial formula of purpose. Then the work is no longer visible as authorship, but as evidence within a narrative.

My proposal is a different balance: themes, yes – but visible as an artistically posited object within the work, not as a legitimization put in front of it. That way the artistic perspective remains recognisable, and the discourse gains depth.

MACHINE MASS PRODUCTION AND AI

New – and highly charged – are the discussions and fears surrounding generative AI. For me the central question is less “consciousness” than authorship: who makes the decisive positings, who bears responsibility, who answers for context and effect?

AI can supply material, accelerate variation and suggest patterns – but an artistic position arises where an artist makes choices, sets limits, takes responsibility for meanings and declares the work a stance. Artists should position themselves confidently and clearly here.

A GENERAL FIELD MODEL FOR CIRCLING IN ON ART

To make my school of thought understandable, I first explain a general field model. This model describes one way of classifying artworks in order to explore their connection to tradition, styles, contexts and concepts more deeply – and thus to make them easier to discuss and to experience. Beyond that, it helps to relate works and artists to one another.

The aim is to move away from a simple, style-based one-word description and to do real justice to the development and change of artistic becoming.

One adopts different perspectives and determines the work's proximity and distance. Through further positings one defines viewpoints in a field. Points of reference can be, for example, art styles, schools of art, principles, contexts, qualities, design, content – or freely chosen perspectives on art.

The choice of points of reference is a conscious positing by the artists or the viewers in order to come closer to works in their inner logic.

- “Art is positing” (of the artists).
- “Defining viewpoints is positing” (of viewing).
- “Positioning is analysis and discussion” (of viewing).

The position is described by proximity to and distance from the points of reference. With this model one can engage very freely with any subject and any art. Artists are, of course, viewers too. Artists can consciously posit points of reference even before positing the work and orient themselves by them – the viewers' gaze, however, is not bound by them in its freedom.

POST-DIGITAL MODEL OF POSITING, AFTER TOBIAS POST

From my practice, my most important perspectives are art informel, Concrete Art and representation. These three perspectives form my points in the field for making my works more accessible, more visible and easier to explain.

MOMENTUM

In cultural studies, “post-digital” roughly denotes a present in which the digital no longer counts as a novelty but as a self-evident part of the reality of our lives and our art. The digital is the artistic present – not automatically innovation.

For more than four decades my artistic work has also included digital processes. As an artist who thinks in painterly terms, the digital is a central building block for me in integrating time and interactivity as momentum. This allows me to posit change within a single work without necessarily depending on serial bodies of work.

INFORMEL

As a child of my time, I am strongly shaped by art informel. My painting is to be understood as gesture – in its singular, momentary uniqueness. Every stroke is movement and anchored in the present moment. (Zen meditation sends its regards.)

CONCRETE ART

Concrete Art is close to me, also through my professional experience as a software developer. Analytical, abstracting, ordering and architectural thinking is a kind of lifeline for me. In Germany this tradition is firmly anchored, not least through the Bauhaus.

TWO STYLISTIC POLES OF ONE AXIS

Put simply, art informel and Concrete Art are for me two poles between creative spontaneity and clear concept. Every work – and every artistic practice – moves between them; hardly anything attains these ideals in pure form. For me, both opposite poles are universally involved in every piece of creative work.

Numerous definitions and explanations exist for both movements. Their historical classification is complex and shaped by research as well as by debate; philosophical thinking often resonates with it.

REPRESENTATION

In everyday use, “representation” is mostly understood as reference to things that are tangible or visible and can be depicted in a picture. The perceived distance between the picture and reality is then often read as a degree of abstraction or simplification. Abstraction thus moves fluidly between representation and non-representation.

At first glance, art informel and Concrete Art appear non-representational and therefore “pure”. If, however, no point of reference whatsoever (no “counterpart”) is thought along with them, the term “abstraction” loses its sharpness – for abstraction normally presupposes that something is abstracted from something.

THE POINT OF REFERENCE AS A POSITING OF VIEWING

From a meta-perspective, forming a point of reference to the work is a positing of viewing. I want to stress this: forming an “opposing” object to the image can be a decision of the viewers – much as one recognises a portrait, a chair or a landscape in a shape.

Taken to the extreme: someone sees a blue surface and decides, “that is an elephant”. Or one chooses an inner reference and says: the blue colour itself is its own counterpart – as a concept of colour.

Conversely, one can also view any picture read as representational without reference to an object and weight it non-representationally. At what point does the pure viewing of design itself already become an “object” of viewing?

This shows that it is not necessarily about an opponent in external reality, but about something standing opposite in subjective experience. “Representation” is thus often more intellectual and philosophical than it appears at first glance – and goes beyond the idea of the realistic likeness.

ADDITIVE CONTEXT

Abstraction thrives on simplification. The essence of abstracting is leaving out. By “adding” rules or gestural positing, I can move the object into an expanded perspective. As a result, representation loses the attribute of standing alone and has to give up completeness. The object shares the whole with something new and becomes more comprehensive; the object loses, the whole grows larger. This is not classic abstraction, but it clarifies the context through the opposite approach.

It is the opposite of leaving out – a creative adding. What matters to me is to make conscious use of a clear counter-pole to representation by adding elements of art informel or Concrete Art.

BACKGROUND: DISCUSSABILITY

To come back to the discussability of art: a concept, a principle or a socially relevant theme can also be seen as an “object” in the work. It thereby gains a place in the artistic context instead of floating freely. The artistic position can then be located – in discourse about content as well – by degrees of abstraction and set in relation to the formal work.

Pragmatically, this approach also allows diagrams and field models to be derived in order to make artists and works comparable. The post-digital model of positing is thus a flexible model for viewing art, allowing one to immerse oneself in a work more deeply, in more layers and more consciously through different perspectives. It offers a framework for making language more precise relationally – with fixed references.

CONTINUATION

All of this is, in general, only a first entry point. Working out the poles in different stylistic subcategories is particularly exciting. I find it very rewarding to get close to the artwork here and to connect clearly visible gestures and rules with the analysis.

A NOTE

I want to stress that this is not about judgement, a competition of quality or the authority to interpret. It is not about setting one viewpoint above another and thereby enforcing hierarchies.

Art possesses a quality of its own that goes far beyond truth, knowledge and

value. Consciousness can grow and give wings to being human wherever freedom, respect and a compassionate attitude are possible.

HOW TO CITE

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MEMBER

WBK e.V. (2026) · BBK Westfalen e.V. (2025) · VERA e.V. · VG
Bild-Kunst

ROLE

Spokesperson, Western Ruhr (2026)

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