

MATTEO CALLEGARI

September 17 – October 25, 2015

The word “distortion” is found on 23 pages of Lyotard's *Discourse Figure*. On page 219, “distortion” coincides with Figure 7, a reproduction of Paul Klee's childhood drawing *Azor Takes Orders from Ms. Frog, 1883-1885* (page 221). It's a small drawing (8 x 18.6cm) that shows, in terse contour, two figures (one looks human, the other equine) enclosed in a room, maybe a wall between them, an interior and exterior. For Lyotard, Klee's first drawings point to a dimension of experience that resists both consciousness and language -- and, like the drawing, oscillates between what is knowable and what is visible. On 208, he writes “when the graphic ceases to present itself as something to be seen...there occurs a radical mutation not only of its function but of [its] space. Now, information operates where figural difference once reigned...‘vibrating until it disjoins.’” A final note on page 430 summarizes Panofsky's theory of “surface consolidation,” the “cartographic” tendency typical of Romanesque miniature painting that treats the background as “a solid, planar working surface” and the figure as “a system of two- dimensional areas defined by one-dimensional lines.” Here, “the transformation of curves indicating hilly terrain” transition into a brightly colored nexus of “sharply delineated ribbons.” These new objects “have lost all reference to a three-dimensional landscape and operate as mere partitions.” So, in place of knowable difference, we get informational distortion.

Matteo Callegari's new paintings seem to follow a similar thread. His work investigates separate areas of painting that combine figurative and abstract elements with painterly surfaces structured after digital source material. He overlays, replicates, erases and manipulates found images (from the Quattrocento to monumental funerary sculptures), while formally reducing them to a linear network of imbricated lines and structures. By adopting practices of informational distortion and delimitation, Callegari negotiates the literal boundaries of possible action while simultaneously limiting them -- responding less to the imbrication or layering of different sources than with the homogenizing effects of perception that result from identifying them as interchan-

geable or simply "information." Here, the matrices of classical painting (the support, the preparation of the surface, the drawing and painting) reveal to what extent the interchangeable qualities of painting's topography might symbolically -- and materially -- reproduce the conditions under which its practice is both investigated and elaborated. In other words, Callegari produces paintings that distort in their making, not just their material but how the material transitions from the objective to unknowable. Or, they are pure surface. Distortion always traffics in images and seeks to reconstitute itself in information.

Michael Capio, 2015