

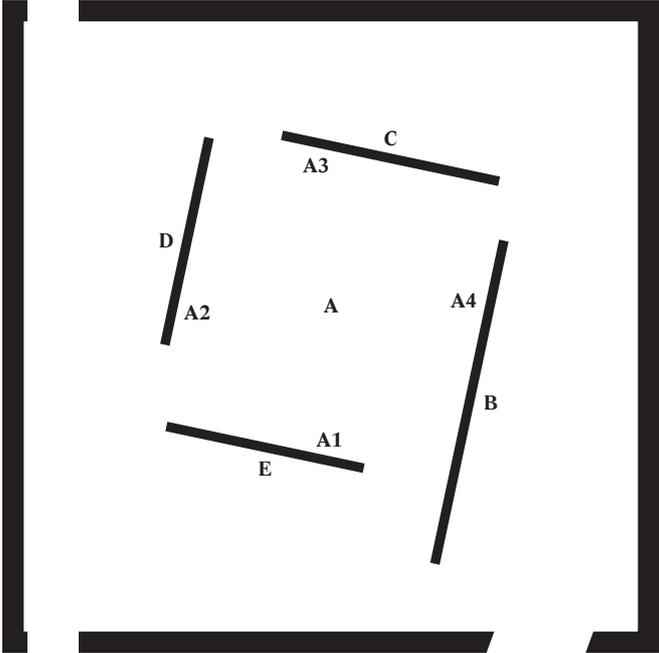
Exhibition Guide

DAVID REED
Vice and Reflection #2

July 12–October 6, 2019

NEUES MUSEUM
State Museum for Art
and Design Nuremberg

Exhibition Hall



Contents

Introduction	p. 5
A Vice and Reflection	p. 11
B Working Drawings	p. 17
C Color Studies	p. 21
D #453	p. 25
E Reflections (Video Loop)	p. 29
Notes	p. 32
Imprint	p. 35



#661, 2016, Detail

Introduction

“I believe painting today is so useful because it carries within it that historical achievement of injecting colors with symbolic and emotional references. We can link this historicity with the experience we have had in painting with the new artificiality and media colors of today. This can help charge these colors with new meanings and enable us to live with them in a variety of ways.”¹

His works have a seductive, sensual power and, at the same time, they provoke reflection – about color, time and movement, about painting and abstraction, about corporeality and emotion.

A New York resident born in San Diego in 1946, David Reed is one of the most important abstract painters of his generation. Within the context of Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, and Pop Art, Reed has developed and refined his painting technique over many decades.

Movement and Abstraction

In his early paintings, the movement of the artist and the movement of the brushstrokes were centerstage: the physical action of painting and the physical properties of the paint determined the picture itself and its dimensions. The physical movement of the paint also documented the duration of the painting process. Already in these early paintings Reed attempted, over and over again, to break the apparent “objectivity” – through numerous experiments with the brushstroke itself.

Gesture and Concept

Although his “Brushstroke Paintings”, created in the mid-1970s, again reference the formulas proclaimed by Abstract Expressionism, such as the gestural application of color or the claim to self-expression, they also feature critical reflection. Instead of emphasizing the importance of the artist’s subjective sense and authenticity it is the artistic gesture itself that becomes the pictorial object of the image that is used to reference or quote a gesture. From then on, the brushstroke appeared more like a photographic illustration of a brushstroke, even though it was painted. It is not his intention to create deliberately constructed illusions, but rather to illustrate and reflect on the conditions of his working method.

Surfaces

Since the early 1980s, Reed has used the palette knife instead of the brush to generate a different pictorial dynamic, enabling him to further reinforce the illusionistic depth of space and the proximity to photography in his works. Thus, in numerous works, an almost photographic three-dimensionality is depicted, which, nonetheless, prevents any accessibility through an often seemingly sealed smoothness of the surface. Beyond this Reed also explores photography in a completely different way: “For me, the edges of a photograph always refer to the possible extension of an image, not to its sharp demarcation. The edges of the photograph contain the surrounding world. I would like my images to work in this way as well.”²

Reflections

When Reed talks about the world around him, he also always includes the past world. His expert knowledge of the history of art, film as well as American and European cultural history has impacted and continues to impact his reflections on painting and this is mirrored in his works: for example, influences from painters of the early Renaissance such as Piero della Francesca, Mannerism and Baroque (especially the color design and depiction of the draperies) to the camera movements of Alfred Hitchcock.

Visual Markings

With analytical (self) observation David Reed developed a visual vocabulary³ which he has continuously revised to this day and incorporated into his works in the form of individual structural elements (such as the brushstrokes). In this sense, the four large-format paintings *Vice and Reflection*, at the center of the installation at Neues Museum Nürnberg and presented in Europe for the first time, provide an insight into the artist’s current oeuvre.

Originally, the works were created for an exhibition (2016/17) to be held at the Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM). Several sources of inspiration were pivotal for the conception and realization of this series of works: the city of Miami, the architecture of the PAMM as well as an older painting entitled *#212 (Vice)* dating from 1984/85. This “blueprint” is divided into horizontal, elongated sections and radiates in rich blue and yellow. The paintings now presented here – three in landscape and one in portrait format – can be directly traced back to *#212 (Vice)* in their coloring and pictorial structure.

Voids and Breaks

Compared to Reed's earlier works, the use of white in this series is conspicuous. Also due to his special painting technique and use of alkyd, this white hue shimmers through his typical, powerfully curved color loops, curls and folds. These, in turn, are given a strikingly generous focus placed on white (painted or sanded) surfaces. These are comparatively large open expanses and empty spaces, cuts and breaks, which perhaps suggest a changed, even greater openness and freedom of the artist.

Color Drama

The title of the exhibition *Vice and Reflection #2* alludes both to the exhibition title in Miami⁴ and the legendary US television series *Miami Vice*, which began in 1984 and comprised a total of 111 episodes spanning five series. The protagonists are two undercover police officers working in the world of drug trafficking, money laundering and arms smuggling. The elaborately and precisely crafted series focused, in particular, on form, color, light and movement.

Bodies and Visual Worlds of Experience

The dramaturgy of color, emotion and corporeality plays a key role both in the television series and in Reed's work. Although this made a major contribution to the *Vice and Reflection* series, Reed seems to be concerned, quite independently of the TV series, with the question of how abstract art, along with the achievements of painting since the 14th century, can represent physicality without depicting the body itself, and how this goes hand in hand with the visual worlds of experience that lie beyond art.

It is a pictorial event that is located between ornamental planarity and illusionistic pictorial depth, that suggests a (physical) proximity, but at the same time withdraws itself. The appeal and emotional impact emanating from Reed's large-format paintings may lie precisely in these contradictions.



#659, 2016, Detail

A Vice and Reflection

A1 #658, 1975 / 2016

Acrylic, alkyd, and oil on polyester

A2 #659, 1975 / 1996–2000 / 2007–2011 / 2014–2015 / 2015–2016 / 2016

Acrylic, alkyd, and oil on polyester

A3 #660, 1975 / 2003–2006 / 2007–2011 / 2015–2016 / 2016–2019

Acrylic, alkyd, and oil on polyester

A4 #661, 2003–2013 / 2016

Acrylic, alkyd, and oil on polyester

Radiantly luminous scenery in blue, violet, yellow and turquoise forms the focal point of this exhibition. The four large-format paintings **#658**, **#659**, **#660** and **#661** are at the center of the presentation in terms of both content and space.

The landscape-format works first shown in Miami (2016/17) were back then presented in direct juxtaposition, i.e. side by side – in formal terms similar to a frieze or filmstrip. For the exhibition in Nuremberg, the artist wanted to deconstruct the sequence of images into individual pictures. Accordingly, each of them is presented on a free-standing wall. While in Miami the experience of a

“I was not able to gain anything from the form and composition of Baroque and Mannerist painting, but I was from their extreme coloring. This extreme coloring corresponds to extreme emotions, though that means this type of painting is very artificial and theatrical. The paintings are like a stage, although the emotions are authentic. I hope this also applies to my paintings.”⁵



#658 (*Vice and Reflection*), 1975 / 2016

continuous series of images was still predominant, here the artist clearly focuses on interruption, disturbance – on a comparatively new visual experience of these images, which are designed as an overall composition. Hanging the works flush with the wall edges, underlines the partitioning of the original frieze, particularly emphasizing the lateral areas of the paintings. This presentation format therefore develops new image and space dynamics. It demands the physical mobility of the viewer and leaves it to them to make the appropriate connections.

The paintings are the result of multiple, independent and temporally divergent painting processes. The multiple dates of the works make this particularly clear. In some cases, the artist has been working on the same paintings for years. As long as his paintings have not yet passed into the final possession of a buyer, Reed takes the liberty of reworking them. “I love to get a painting back and re-work it. Also it means they're strangely open in some sense.”⁶ Here, openness goes hand in hand with the artist’s openness to repeatedly review and revise both his intellectual considerations and his aesthetic possibilities on a practical level and his painterly possibilities on a technical one. This also includes Reed digitally enlarging visual elements from older paintings, reproducing them using stencils and integrating them, sometimes in several layers, into current works.

In the four paintings on display there are also several stenciled forms and “brush traces”, which were produced on the basis of older works. The white brushstrokes at the lower edge of the paintings in landscape format can also be regarded as “references”. They date from 1975 and serve as a blueprint here. This also makes it

clear that David Reed repeatedly translates the individual handwriting – which in the “pure” gesture of the brushstroke was regarded as the climax of painterly achievement – into a different mode (of reproduction). As a reproduction or reference it makes itself a theme – and must question itself.

In this sense, in this exhibition David Reed once again reflects on those factors so important for his work: painting, time and repetition. “I hate the conceit that painting, especially abstraction, is beyond time. It takes time to view a painting, and I want to make time part of the experience of my paintings. Developing as a painter in the 1970s, I wanted to reveal the process of their making.”⁷

In addition to the history of art and film, it is likewise his personal history or the history of the development of his work that repeatedly offers the artist new references and allows new conclusions to be drawn.

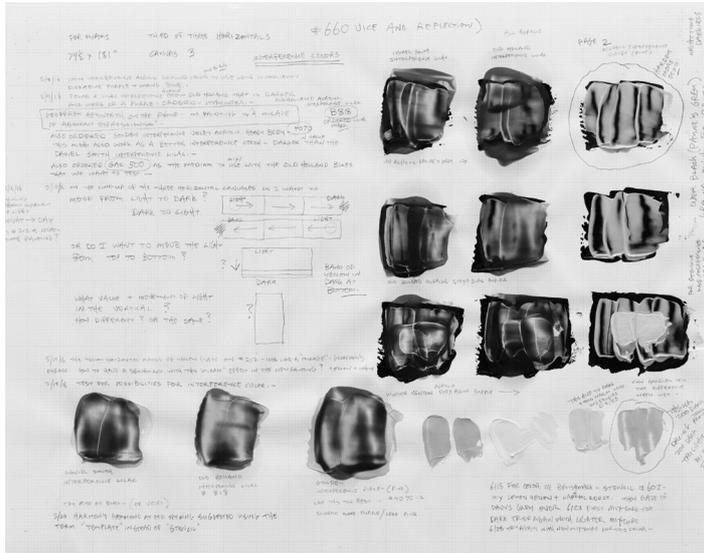
B Working Drawings

26 *Working Drawings*, 2016

(for paintings #658, #659, #660, #661)

Mixed media on graph paper

Private collection Zurich



Working Drawing, 2016

The highly complex, often long and elaborate work phases for individual works are illustrated in the *Working Drawings*. These also show the intensity and care taken by David Reed when documenting the transformations of his works. Every decision, including every alternative, seems to be meticulously recorded. In this sense, these “recordings” on graph paper appear as precisely thought-out descriptions of states.

“As I work on paintings for years and as they go through many changes, my notes become a record of a process. But it was hard to keep track of those scraps of paper. Now I keep the diagrams, color samples, measurements, and notes about my decisions in a diary form – on separate pages for each painting. (...) Each painting has a story with digressions and plot twists; sometimes there’s a surprise ending.”⁸



Like almost all of David Reed's works and series, these diary-like *Working Drawings* convey the tense relationship between intellectual calculation and spontaneous painterly expression. The sheets, featuring color samples, sketches, and text fragments, often reaching right to the edge of the picture, are a window into the artist's diverse reference system. There are references to American and European Art History, to the exhibition space where the paintings were shown at the Perez Art Museum (built by Herzog & de Meuron), and Michael Mann's TV show *Miami Vice* from 2006. Additionally there are references to earlier work by the artist.

C Color Studies

Color Studies #46, #47, #40, 2016–2019

(for paintings #658, #659, #660)

Acrylic and alkyd on Dibond panel

Color Studies #42, #39, #48, 2016 respectively 2016/2018

(for paintings #658, #659, #660)

Acrylic on Dibond panel respectively Acrylic and alkyd on Dibond panel

Color Studies #38, #43, #44, 2016–2019

(for paintings #658, #659, #660)

Acrylic on Dibond panel respectively Acrylic and alkyd on Dibond panel

Color Studies #37, #45, #33, #41, 2016

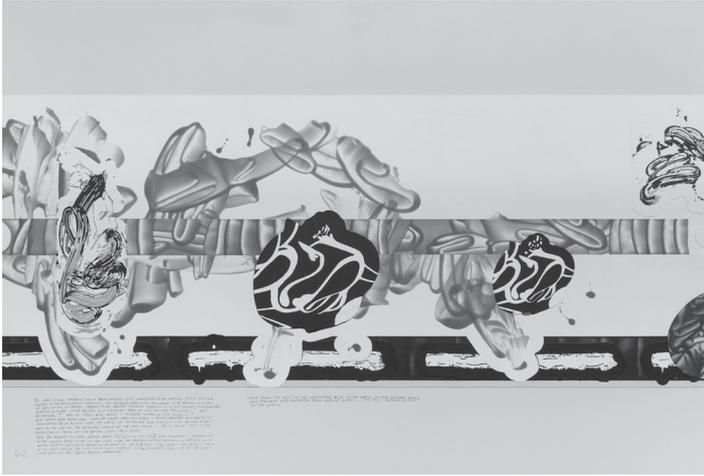
(for painting #661)

Acrylic on Dibond panel respectively Acrylic and alkyd on Dibond panel

The studies carried out between 2016 and 2019 relate directly to the work group *Vice and Reflection*.

On a smaller scale of 1:5 the **Color Studies** illustrate various possibilities of the “pictured action”. Partial elements of the larger paintings – the typical curved loops, ornaments and folds, from wide to the smallest of brushstrokes – are picked up on.

“I want more than ever to have the parts not fit together – to have the painting break apart... to be less resolved than ever.”⁹



Color Study #39, 2016 (for painting #659)

David Reed copies these “painting gestures” in several sizes, in order to re-use them afterwards in different new compositions, twisting, trimming and mirroring them. In some cases, these rearrangements lead to a total deletion of entire areas of his works. Through these different variants, the artist manages to keep the “prototypes” in motion and, if necessary, give them a new existence. “I often try to give my work the feeling that it is not finished. I don’t always succeed but I try. ... I want the paintings to look open, despite the ‘finished’ look of the surface.”¹⁰

Comparable to the *Working Drawings*, this series of works also illustrates David Reed’s painstaking precision and analytical dedication when developing his paintings and recording the respective work processes.

The openness and freedom signaled by these drawings to question what is fixed is a characteristic of David Reed’s approach. They provide ideas for new developments and new pictures.

D #453

#453, 1996–2000

Oil and alkyd on canvas

Neues Museum Nuremberg

At the artist's request, work **#453** from the Neues Museum collection was included in the exhibition on account of its structural affinity.

In comparison to the *Vice and Reflection* series, the earlier painting **#453** shows an overall more strongly constructed pictorial structure. The five extremely elongated, parallel and pastel-colored panels may be reminiscent of registers, stuccoes and ornamental ribbons in art, craft and architecture. At the right-hand edge of the picture they are “slowed down” by dark, slightly larger “color loops” and an additional, vertically applied picture cutout. Through this caesura, the otherwise overall uniformly rhythmic picture structure acquires an entirely different dynamic.

Although several layers of paint were applied, the colored ribbons underneath shine through giving the impression of spatial depth. Because of the use of oil and alkyd light can seep through the different image layers, as in a photo or film shot. Alkyd has

“I’m attracted to all the extremes of color, but there is one aspect of color that I try to keep equal in my paintings, intensity. That’s what gives my paintings a sense that they are screens. Because of this equal intensity, light seems to come from inside the painting.”¹¹

“I want the light to flow over and through the colors without being blocked. This moving light lets one connect emotionally to all parts of the painting.”¹²



#453, 1996–2000

the property of enclosing the individual color pigments, i.e. they are detached from the painting substrate and thus also retain their brilliance.

“I found that I was able to avoid conventional composition if I thought in terms of filmic devices; zooms and pans, cuts, inserts as flashbacks, areas in and out of focus, the extension past the edge of the canvas. I like wide horizontal, cinemaScope canvases because they create a sense of movement that comes and goes. We tend to notice movement from the periphery of our perceptual field.”¹³

Likewise David Reed elsewhere then adds: “When you look at an isolated part of my long horizontal paintings, the other parts, which you see out of the corner of your eye, seem to move, because peripheral vision is especially sensitive to movement. I can reinforce this effect with paint – some areas are blurred like out-of-focus photographs, and others are rendered sharply.”¹⁴

As with numerous other works, the pictured action in #453 may also be a reference to film: elongated film screens, different image levels or a camera movement at different speeds can be associated here.

E Reflections



Pilot Episode Miami Vice 1984: Reflections, 2016

***Pilot Episode Miami Vice 1984: Reflections*, 2016**

video loop, 59 seconds

This is a famous film excerpt from the original pilot of the US television series *Miami Vice* from 1984: a shot of the hood of a black sports car in which the surrounding streetlights of the city of Miami are reflected. David Reed uses these nocturnal light reflections as a kind of backdrop for his paintings. By using digital montage technology to insert his painting #212 (*Vice*) into the film sequence, he creates the impression of the car moving underneath the picture or driving through it. Film and painting permeate and merge. The aesthetics of the popular television series are mirrored here and transformed at the same time.

Despite the “cinematic smoothness”, the short video has a poetic dimension: “The location of the painting remains indeterminate. It has a kind of heavenly appearance that we can only perceive indirectly, in the color reflexes on the reflecting paint. The picture is not present *in toto* but develops. It appears and disappears again.”¹⁵

In this way, Reed also makes use of various film structures and methods for his painting – taking it into abstraction. With visual montages presented in this way, he also demonstrates his clear distance from artists and art critics who primarily propagate subjectivity, originality and so-called pure painting, painting that is supposed to refer to nothing other than itself.

Instead, David Reed's aim is to engage in a dialog with the visual world of experience of the present, i.e. to repeatedly reflect on how, alongside the history of painterly abstraction, today's media with their diverse visual worlds impact and shape his own work. To constantly initiate this process with all its back-references and new formulations is the key impetus for his work. For decades now, both absorbing and reflecting the image aesthetics of different media – such as television and film aesthetics – has been an essential driving force behind David Reed's oeuvre.



#659, 2016, Detail

Notes

1. David Reed in conversation with Karlheinz Pichler, in: "Einander ausschließende Aspekte der Malerei unter einen Hut bringen", in: *KULTUR*, July 2013, from URL: www.kulturzeitschrift.at/kritiken/ausstellung
2. David Reed in conversation with Magdalena Kröner, in: "Ich möchte die Zeit zurück in die abstrakte Malerei führen", in: *Kunstforum International*, Vol. 225, 2014, p. 156
3. David Reed describes them as "markings"
4. *Vice and Reflection – An Old Painting, New Paintings and Animations*
5. David Reed in: "Eigentlich ist es die abstrakte Malerei, die heute die Errungenschaften der Pop-art fortsetzt und weiterentwickelt. Ein Gespräch mit Noemi Smolik", in: *Kunstforum International*, Vol. 133, 1996, p.304
6. David Reed quoted from: Richard Schiff, in: "Irgendwo im Licht", in: *David Reed, Heart of Glass, Gemälde und Zeichnungen 1967–2012*, exhibition catalog Kunstmuseum Bonn, edited by Christoph Schreier, Cologne 2012, p. 69–88, here p. 54
7. Strange things can happen: David Reed in conversation with Pia Gottschaller, in: *David Reed, Heart of Glass, Gemälde und Zeichnungen 1967–2012*, exhibition catalog Kunstmuseum Bonn, edited by Christoph Schreier, Cologne 2012, p. 89–112, here p. 60
8. David Reed in: "Ein Gespräch mit Dorothy und Herbert Vogel", in: *Rock, Paper Scissors / David Reed, Cologne 2009*, p. 63
9. C.f. footnote 6, here p. 54
10. C.f. footnote. 6, here p. 55
11. C.f. footnote. 7, here p. 63
12. C.f. footnote 7, here p. 62
13. C.f. footnote 7, here p. 61
14. David Reed quoted from: Katy Siegel: "David Reed: Painting Over Time", in: *David Reed, You look good in blue*, exhibition catalog Kunstverein St. Gallen Kunstmuseum, Kunstverein Hannover, edited by Konrad Bitterli and Stephan Berg, Nuremberg 2001, p. 8-35, here p. 14.
15. Thomas Heyden in the 2019 exhibition catalog (not yet published at the time this Exhibition Guide went to press)



Imprint

Editor: Neues Museum, State Museum of Art and Design Nuremberg

Texts and Editing: Claudia Marquardt

Translation: Claire Cahm

Graphic Design: Yvonne Zmarsly, Csilla Wenczel

Production: Frischmann Druck und Medien GmbH & Co. KG, Amberg

This brochure was compiled by the museum's education department to accompany the exhibition

DAVID REED. *Vice and Reflection #2*

July 12–October 6, 2019

Exhibition Curator: Thomas Heyden

For the exhibition a catalogue is published by Verlag für moderne Kunst

Courtesy Häusler Contemporary München | Zürich

Photographic credits: © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019, Häusler Contemporary München | Zürich (Lance Brewer), Häusler Contemporary München | Zürich und reedstudio, New York (Silvia Ros), Neues Museum (Annette Kradisch)



NEUES MUSEUM

Klarissenplatz

Post address: Luitpoldstraße 5, 90402 Nuremberg, Germany

Reception: tel. +49 (0)911 240 20 69, fax +49 (0)911 240 20 29

Guided tours / Education department:

tel. +49 (0)911 240 20 36 or

museumspaedagogik@nmn.de

Website and Newsletter:

www.nmn.de  

Opening hours:

Tuesday–Sunday 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Thursday 10 a.m.–8 p.m.

Closed on Mondays

Public holidays:

October 3, 10 a.m.–6 p.m.