

Markus Linnenbrink

“WHATWETHINKASINSIGNIFICANTPROVIDESTHEPURESTAIRWEBREATHE”

30 April to 7 September 2025

Es Baluard Museu / Casal Solleric

Curated by Fernando Gómez de la Cuesta and Jackie Herbst

In 1942, Henri Matisse wrote the following in a letter to André Rouveyre: “I have observed that in the work of the Orientals, the drawing of the voids left around the leaves had the same importance as the drawing itself.”¹ Perhaps this interest in the imperceptible was one of the reasons why a team of Japanese scientists received the Nobel Prize for Physics in 2015, for their studies on neutrinos.² For those not versed in quantum physics, neutrinos can be defined as the smallest components of reality. These tiny particles, which barely interact with matter, fill the universe, moving through it endlessly. They are known as ghost particles, invisible messengers that connect the universe, moving outward from within.

Understanding the world from this cosmic microscale leads us to reflect on the voids created between objects—such as the spaces between the leaves on a tree, or between its branches—so as to, from there, construct a new reality. All of this involves understanding that the void is full of nothing, and that far from being a deficit, it appears as a fundamental presence. What is more, it means accepting that the void is an invisible structure that is able to generate form, able to articulate spatial relationships and produce rhythms and meanings, just like the spaces between words or the gaps found between the lines.

Exploring the world from a perspective where things are, at once, present and absent, means playing with the frontier between visible and invisible: in what is apparently insignificant and imperceptible, quite often the deepest truths are concealed. With this as his premise, Markus Linnenbrink presents his most recent project, “WHATWETHINKASINSIGNIFICANTPROVIDESTHEPURESTAIRWEBREATHE” [What We Think As Insignificant Provides the Purest Air We Breathe]. The title, taken from a verse of the Stevie Wonder song “The Secret Life of Plants”,³ encapsulates a subtle notion, which when expressed with sensitivity, holds together the essential mystery of perceiving the void.

In this state, where the limits are blurred between presence and absence, between what can be measured and the imperceptible, the artist posits the interstice as an amorphous space for future becoming. Just as neutrinos cut through matter, in the site-specific interventions of Markus Linnenbrink, now on a human scale, mural paintings cut

¹ Matisse, Henri. “Lettre à André Rouveyre sur le dessin de l’arbre”. In *Écrits et propos sur l’art*. Paris: Hermann, 1972 [original quotation: “J’avais déjà remarqué que dans les travaux des Orientaux le dessin des vides laissés autour des feuilles comptait autant que le dessin lui-même.”].

² The 2015 Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded to Takaaki Kajita and Arthur B. McDonald for the discovery of neutrino oscillations. This finding demonstrated that neutrinos have mass.

³ Wonder, Stevie. “The Secret Life of Plants”. In *Journey Through “The Secret Life of Plants”*. USA: Tamla Motown, 1979.

through space, activating a dialogue between architecture, painting and perception. Linnenbrink is inspired by ongoing exploration as experience, by the interstice as a binding component of reality, and by painting as the ideal medium for transcending physical limits.

This is why “WHATWETHINKASINSIGNIFICANTPROVIDESTHEPURESTAIRWEBREATHE” challenges our spatial and visual references, inviting visitors to Casal Solleric and Es Baluard Museu to revise the way we position ourselves in front of/in/within a work of art. The sensorial path highlights his interest for transience, for colour, for painting and for architecture—all of which are intertwined in these installations, leading the body to experience the spaces in a genuine, unexpected manner.

Linnenbrink’s interventions are the catalyst for *habitable painting*,⁴ painting that is transitable, which at Es Baluard Museu sets off a dialogue in movement, thanks to the path set out by his pictorial action: from the building’s main lift to the walls that have been intervened upon, on the extreme opposite end of the hallway, what appears is a painting that ascends, raising the viewer’s gaze from the floor to the ceiling of the main hallway. A large-format intervention that guides us to new ways of experiencing, of understanding space, proposing a new dimension from where to understand painting in an expanded manner.

When it comes to the intervention in Casal Solleric, it presents us with an immersive, encompassing experience that turns the emblematic interior courtyard of the building into a route like never seen before. Once again, *habitable painting* is expanded outwards from within, allowing the body to enter fully into it. Here too we have a large, ascending installation that lifts our gaze, although in this occasion guiding it to the open sky, only to then return us to floor level, forging new points of view, lines of flight that mutate at every step.

In these intermediate phases, where experience becomes unpredictable, it becomes necessary to *look with the body*. Moving through a Markus Linnenbrink installation is a phenomenological exercise,⁵ where perception and memory are activated through movement and action. As viewers, we perceive the world and things on the scale of our own bodies, so that moving through these spaces involves putting our full attention into practice. This active, willing exercise in listening becomes a fundamental tool for deciphering the layers of memory that emerge between our bodies and our surroundings. By means of this evocative relationship, we begin to assimilate the totality of space we find ourselves in.

Voids are not gaps or holes, just as horizontal bands are not mere grounds. Linnenbrink’s installations are able to expand beyond their placements, inhabiting them and including

⁴ Barro, David. “Markus Linnenbrink. Pintura en tiempo real”. In *Markus Linnenbrink. FLAMINGLOVEANDDESTINY*. Santiago de Compostela: Fundación DIDAC, 2023 [exhibition catalogue].

⁵ *Phenomenology of Perception*, published in 1945, is one of the key works by French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In it, the author seeks to comprehend perception not as a physiological process or as intellectual interpretation, but as embodied experience that situates us in the world: the body is postulated as a vehicle through which we experience reality.

the space surrounding them as their own. A space that is here allied with painting, even more: space becomes painting. Painting that takes on an expanded and expansive dimension, constructed on the basis of colour. For ultimately, without colour, there is no painting.

In his work, colour challenges us so intensely on a physical and visual level that we end up questioning the very experience of painting. Painting, which is able to reposition and reference itself, shrugs off all conventions as it explores its own limits and transgressive possibilities. Linnenbrink's work is deeply rooted in the materiality of colour, requiring the viewer to recognise the artist's own gesture intuitively.

His control of dripping technique and the layering of pigmentation creates a tension between deliberate control and random spontaneity. His production process resembles a performance, where the rhythmic repetition of simple, sincere gestures builds dense chromatic correlations—here too, outward from within. Applied in near-geological layers, the paint creates vibrant surfaces that remind us how memory and perception are ever-evolving processes, shaped by interaction between chance and intentionality, where any given trace might be a memory emerging from the intersection between matter and absence.

Colour, size and immersion are vehicles for memory, perception and emotion. With his work, Linnenbrink calls on us to reconsider the essence of what surrounds us, as the act of looking is transformed. Strata of memory reminding us that in simple drops of paint, or in the apparent space arising between them, even in the imperceptible transparency of air, only conscious experience is able to grant us meaning and magnitude.