When Jiří Georg Dokoupil entered the art world in the early 80s, it happened in an impressively free and non-identical manner right from the start. From exhibition to exhibition, he showed series of paintings, which differed so much from each other that a consistent approach as a leitmotif was neither seen nor felt. But this was not merely about stylistic change, such as how Francis Picabia changed his style like shirts, while maintaining his presence as a consistent artistic personality. In Dokoupil’s work, it was not only the style that changed, but also the whole artistic attitude. From series of paintings to series of paintings, the artistic position changed, as well as its ambition and the concept of art associated with it. Each of the series appeared as if painted by a different artist in every respect, such as in form, content, distance, nearness, perspective, composition, concern and even in the organized chaos of the pictorial diagram. It is a non-concept of painting that radically changes visual identities, countersigned by an ‘Ego’ that Dokoupil no longer is at the very moment of the completion of a series. As soon as a series starts to form a harmonic concept and a coherent identity, he already gravitates towards something else, following what Michel Foucault called the ‘theatrical multiplication of the Ego’. Freed from the bondage of selfhood, Dokoupil enters a trivial position regarding the doctrines, isms and stereotypes of seemingly consistent aesthetics and artistic concepts, opening up to the inconsistency of the artistic subject itself.

This wholeheartedly open artistic position traces back to the time of Dokoupil’s emigration from the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in 1968. At the age of 14, he had fled to West Germany with his family, escaping the Soviet tanks that crushed the ‘Prague Spring’ movement in favor of a suppressive regime installed by the USSR. His personal loss of national, social and personal identity, his apostasy concerning ideologies of any kind and his suspicion of the questionable nature of politics as a policy of social responsibility as well as a kind of art that is committed to external politics, all formed the unconditional conditions for his decision in favor of an art of manifold non-identity. Since then, Dokoupil’s non-identical art eludes identifications and categorizations, without falling into the trap of an ideology of the anti-ideological, always differently refraining and distracting from what is considered

---

4 ‘Politics is the art of preventing people from taking part in affairs which properly concern them.” (Paul Valéry: Tel Quel 2, (Paris, 1943), p. 41. (translated by SE)
In such a way, Dokoupil's distraction of the subject executes a permanent deterritorialization of what currently applies to painting as an art form, in terms of the discourse, and institutionally, but takes a fresh stand with every pictorial invention, with the intention to capture forms for something unexpected. Thereby, and this is crucial, Dokoupil always jeopardizes everything for a distinct pictorial invention, namely for the invention of a non-autonomous painting: Starting from scratch with each series and each painting, with the causeless reason of a self-standing, self-assertive, and self-justifying painting, he renounces any theoretical backing. For more than thirty years, manifested in the form of currently about 137 series of paintings, Dokoupil risked this journey into the unknown with everything necessary, such as a specific thinking via sensations and sensations of concepts, but also a necessary blindness, naiveté, fearlessness, wholeheartedness and frankness—all in ever changing configurations. Each of Dokoupil's series of paintings is the experiment of painting-as-thought, of a unique logic of sensation that moves away from itself in order to commit to an opening into the unknown and the unforeseen.

Each of his pictorial inventions is nevertheless an artistic statement, an affirmation of a visual claim, and an assertiveness of a freely respiring form without which there is no interesting painting. Such pictorial formulations are naturally constructions of image-identities in light of a sensual presence that resembles a glance precedent to any imagination. But these identities do not serve for their self-adulation, but for the non-identity of a subject-like presence. For Dokoupil, it is always about "the Münchhausen trick of carrying out the identification of the non-identical." His paintings resemble the non-identical precisely because he is pursuing their self-contained identity within themselves—an impossible autonomy and, regarding the hole in the sense of art, a creatio ex nihilo that is as (im)possible as it is necessary. Therein, Dokoupil is akin to Andy Warhol (actually Andrej Warhola), whose family stems from the north-eastern part of what is now Slovakia and who formulated the core of his mission as it was to Warhol as: "It doesn't mean if you don't believe in nothing that it's nothing. You only know that among other things, so-called pearl-luster pigments are involved, in only one, but also extensive series that have developed over a long period of time and thus have manifested in different forms within their framework of invention and their method of realization. For instance the Candle Paintings, out of which Dokoupil always gets new aspects and amazing variations, and especially the Soap Bubble Paintings, on which he has been working for over twenty years and which he has currently developed into a new stunning presence are an excellent example of Dokoupil's endless journey into the unknown and the unforeseen.

Herein he is, above all, an inventor of a technique for creating images, an image scientist, specifically an alchemist of (im)possible images. The Soap Bubble Paintings are the result of many years of continuously varied experiments that are based on refined experimental set-ups of chemical compounds. The aim is to develop a method for the creation of original paintings, the beautiful paradox of a technologically mediated production of paintings that are not reproducible. Besides, the Soap Bubble Paintings do not consist of painted bubbles. Dokoupil does not paint soap bubbles, but he creates abstract paintings with real soap bubbles. Using metal bubble wands, he makes large soap bubbles, which he pulls over the canvas in a way that makes them burst and leave colorful traces with a surprising formative tendency. These traces consist of soap-lye enriched with pigments, which accumulate in the form of two molecular layers inside and outside of a thin dipolar film of water, forming a membrane that results in only one, but also extensive series that have developed over a long period of time and thus have manifested in different forms within their framework of invention and their method of realization. For instance the Candle Paintings, out of which Dokoupil always gets new aspects and amazing variations, and especially the Soap Bubble Paintings, on which he has been working for over twenty years and which he has currently developed into a new stunning presence are an excellent example of Dokoupil's endless journey into the unknown and the unforeseen.

The estimated 137 series of paintings, which Dokoupil has created since the late seventies until today, differ from each other in everything that constitutes a painting, such as in artistic approach, attitude and ambition, in painterly diagrammatics, pictorial logic of sensation, varying implicit concept of art, polyphonic non-composition and much more. Accordingly, the series also vary in their amount of individual paintings. There are pictorial inventions that materialized in only a few paintings, sometimes in only one, but also extensive series that have developed over a long period of time and thus have manifested in different forms within their framework of invention and their method of realization. For instance the Candle Paintings, out of which Dokoupil always gets new aspects and amazing variations, and especially the Soap Bubble Paintings, on which he has been working for over twenty years and which he has currently developed into a new stunning presence are an excellent example of Dokoupil's endless journey into the unknown and the unforeseen.

Dokoupil renounces any theoretical backing. For more than thirty years, manifested in the form of currently about 137 series of paintings, Dokoupil risked this journey into the unknown with everything necessary, such as a specific thinking via sensations and sensations of concepts, but also a necessary blindness, naiveté, fearlessness, wholeheartedness and frankness—all in ever changing configurations. Each of Dokoupil's series of paintings is the experiment of painting-as-thought, of a unique logic of sensation that moves away from itself in order to commit to an opening into the unknown and the unforeseen.

The estimated 137 series of paintings, which Dokoupil has created since the late seventies until today, differ from each other in everything that constitutes a painting, such as in artistic approach, attitude and ambition, in painterly diagrammatics, pictorial logic of sensation, varying implicit concept of art, polyphonic non-composition and much more. Accordingly, the series also vary in their amount of individual paintings. There are pictorial inventions that materialized in only a few paintings, sometimes in only one, but also extensive series that have developed over a long period of time and thus have manifested in different forms within their framework of invention and their method of realization. For instance the Candle Paintings, out of which Dokoupil always gets new aspects and amazing variations, and especially the Soap Bubble Paintings, on which he has been working for over twenty years and which he has currently developed into a new stunning presence are an excellent example of Dokoupil's endless journey into the unknown and the unforeseen.

Herein he is, above all, an inventor of a technique for creating images, an image scientist, specifically an alchemist of (im)possible images. The Soap Bubble Paintings are the result of many years of continuously varied experiments that are based on refined experimental set-ups of chemical compounds. The aim is to develop a method for the creation of original paintings, the beautiful paradox of a technologically mediated production of paintings that are not reproducible. Besides, the Soap Bubble Paintings do not consist of painted bubbles. Dokoupil does not paint soap bubbles, but he creates abstract paintings with real soap bubbles. Using metal bubble wands, he makes large soap bubbles, which he pulls over the canvas in a way that makes them burst and leave colorful traces with a surprising formative tendency. These traces consist of soap-lye enriched with pigments, which accumulate in the form of two molecular layers inside and outside of a thin dipolar film of water, forming a membrane that results in only one, but also extensive series that have developed over a long period of time and thus have manifested in different forms within their framework of invention and their method of realization. For instance the Candle Paintings, out of which Dokoupil always gets new aspects and amazing variations, and especially the Soap Bubble Paintings, on which he has been working for over twenty years and which he has currently developed into a new stunning presence are an excellent example of Dokoupil's endless journey into the unknown and the unforeseen.

The estimated 137 series of paintings, which Dokoupil has created since the late seventies until today, differ from each other in everything that constitutes a painting, such as in artistic approach, attitude and ambition, in painterly diagrammatics, pictorial logic of sensation, varying implicit concept of art, polyphonic non-composition and much more. Accordingly, the series also vary in their amount of individual paintings. There are pictorial inventions that materialized in only a few paintings, sometimes in only one, but also extensive series that have developed over a long period of time and thus have manifested in different forms within their framework of invention and their method of realization. For instance the Candle Paintings, out of which Dokoupil always gets new aspects and amazing variations, and especially the Soap Bubble Paintings, on which he has been working for over twenty years and which he has currently developed into a new stunning presence are an excellent example of Dokoupil's endless journey into the unknown and the unforeseen.

Herein he is, above all, an inventor of a technique for creating images, an image scientist, specifically an alchemist of (im)possible images. The Soap Bubble Paintings are the result of many years of continuously varied experiments that are based on refined experimental set-ups of chemical compounds. The aim is to develop a method for the creation of original paintings, the beautiful paradox of a technologically mediated production of paintings that are not reproducible. Besides, the Soap Bubble Paintings do not consist of painted bubbles. Dokoupil does not paint soap bubbles, but he creates abstract paintings with real soap bubbles. Using metal bubble wands, he makes large soap bubbles, which he pulls over the canvas in a way that makes them burst and leave colorful traces with a surprising formative tendency. These traces consist of soap-lye enriched with pigments, which accumulate in the form of two molecular layers inside and outside of a thin dipolar film of water, forming a membrane that results in only one, but also extensive series that have developed over a long period of time and thus have manifested in different forms within their framework of invention and their method of realization. For instance the Candle Paintings, out of which Dokoupil always gets new aspects and amazing variations, and especially the Soap Bubble Paintings, on which he has been working for over twenty years and which he has currently developed into a new stunning presence are an excellent example of Dokoupil's endless journey into the unknown and the unforeseen.

Herein he is, above all, an inventor of a technique for creating images, an image scientist, specifically an alchemist of (im)possible images. The Soap Bubble Paintings are the result of many years of continuously varied experiments that are based on refined experimental set-ups of chemical compounds. The aim is to develop a method for the creation of original paintings, the beautiful paradox of a technologically mediated production of paintings that are not reproducible. Besides, the Soap Bubble Paintings do not consist of painted bubbles. Dokoupil does not paint soap bubbles, but he creates abstract paintings with real soap bubbles. Using metal bubble wands, he makes large soap bubbles, which he pulls over the canvas in a way that makes them burst and leave colorful traces with a surprising formative tendency. These traces consist of soap-lye enriched with pigments, which accumulate in the form of two molecular layers inside and outside of a thin dipolar film of water, forming a membrane that results in only one, but also extensive series that have developed over a long period of time and thus have manifested in different forms within their framework of invention and their method of realization. For instance the Candle Paintings, out of which Dokoupil always gets new aspects and amazing variations, and especially the Soap Bubble Paintings, on which he has been working for over twenty years and which he has currently developed into a new stunning presence are an excellent example of Dokoupil's endless journey into the unknown and the unforeseen.

Herein he is, above all, an inventor of a technique for creating images, an image scientist, specifically an alchemist of (im)possible images. The Soap Bubble Paintings are the result of many years of continuously varied experiments that are based on refined experimental set-ups of chemical compounds. The aim is to develop a method for the creation of original paintings, the beautiful paradox of a technologically mediated production of paintings that are not reproducible. Besides, the Soap Bubble Paintings do not consist of painted bubbles. Dokoupil does not paint soap bubbles, but he creates abstract paintings with real soap bubbles. Using metal bubble wands, he makes large soap bubbles, which he pulls over the canvas in a way that makes them burst and leave colorful traces with a surprising formative tendency. These traces consist of soap-lye enriched with pigments, which accumulate in the form of two molecular layers inside and outside of a thin dipolar film of water, forming a membrane that results in only one, but also extensive series that have developed over a long period of time and thus have manifested in different forms within their framework of invention and their method of realization. For instance the Candle Paintings, out of which Dokoupil always gets new aspects and amazing variations, and especially the Soap Bubble Paintings, on which he has been working for over twenty years and which he has currently developed into a new stunning presence are an excellent example of Dokoupil's endless journey into the unknown and the unforeseen.
formation of colors: "Chemistry produces pictures."9 he said, and went so far as to speak of the "painterly masterpiece of Chemistry."10

A certain life of its own also exists in the soap bubbles, which form the pictorial structures in the Soap Bubble Paintings. Dokoupil has developed a method of creating images by their own accord, as he lets the self-will of the chemical processes (occurring as the bubbles burst) have its own way. It has always interested him to refrain from individual expression, personal perspective and apparent authenticity of the artistic subject within the framework of his concept of non-identical painting. Regarding the Soap Bubble Paintings this is part of his composed decomposition, whereby the constellations of soap bubble traces on canvas first of all become a painting. In this way, Dokoupil stages dynamic areas of tension between chemistry and art, between non-subjective gestures and scientific methods, between calculated spontaneity and a calculation that is undermining itself, between flat formality and spatial illusion and between dissolution of forms and shaping of forms—a painterly thinking through sensations, creating possible third terms beyond binary codes, like form and content. The Soap Bubble Paintings are due to this logic of sensation that spreads in the form of endless patterns, oscillating between being formless and becoming form—an informal thinking in soap bubbles on canvas.

Dokoupil’s soap bubble thinking cons the stereotypes and codes of compositional patterns, however, without yielding to the “conformism of destructions.”11 Soap bubble thinking is always in search of a fascinating dissonant harmony and of a calculated non-calculated composition, obtained from an exceedance of the aesthetic with aesthetic means, beginning again and again with each single painting. Dokoupil’s logic of soap bubble sensations turns compositions “gauche,” thereby creating unique non-compositions—formless soap bubbles becoming form as an abstract painting. There is always a little “gaucherie” in intelligence, as Roland Barthes remarked.12

The results are impressive and in fact exactly what is at issue for Dokoupil, namely fascination that finds its fulfillment in the enthusiasm of the viewer. The material event of the Soap Bubble Paintings is pure fascination—they are fascinating beings of sensation. Their complexity also lies in the fact that Dokoupil displaces the chemically induced colorfulness of the bubbles on the canvas in a way that makes them polyphonically appealing, with their colors changing with different incidences of light and visual angles. In mere passing, a matte and linear beige-gray turns into a shiny green metallic surface, a white bubble turns into a purple bubble with three-dimensional illusion, a cold blue turns into a warm phosphorescent turquoise. The colors are not only shimmering and not only doing so in complementary colors, but they sometimes change completely, including the composition, atmosphere, possible associations, basically the entire painting. A soap bubble painting is many paintings, a polyphonic non-identical composition, inviting the viewer into a visual polylogue.

The Soap Bubble Paintings are clearly designed as strict non-figurative abstractions, but they are also open to the entire universe of associations, which is suggested by the phenomenon of the bubble with its complex colors and formal structures on the canvas, which depend on the incidence of light. The universe of associations includes constellations of synapses that the soap bubble thinking has left behind, colorful underwater worlds, planetary flurries, micro- and macrocosmic structures, faces that appear briefly and then disappear, glass spheres in which one likes to imagine the future and of

9 ibid., p. 108. (translated by SE)
10 ibid. (translated by SE)
11 ibid., p. 174.
course any imaginable bubble, starting from the bubble of love in Hieronymus Bosch's painting "The Garden of Earthly Delights" (1485-1510) to protective covers of any kind, the bag of waters and other shared interior spaces and associated elemental senses of home, origin, and shared iridescent spaces. A child of thinking via sensations. Initial talking of an eternal new beginning, considering the unforeseen. And let us not forget: "Fascination is the gaze of solitude." Opening up to this, one ultimately opens up to the inconsistency of anything that is regarded as truth and reality. That is where the existential seriousness of the Soap Bubble Paintings' playfulness can be encountered. For an "opening up to contingency can only happen in a playful way, because it is an opening up to a world game that lacks a final determination." In the words of Friedrich Nietzsche: "We have art so that we do not perish from the truth." Art that exposes itself to that is a strong game, which in contrast to the frivolous playfulness of a weak game, is characterized by an "amusing, capricious excitement" that comes up when a game has found a form that parties the abyss of ontological contingency. Jiri Georg Dokoupil is one of the artists who delight us with pictorial inventions of a strong game and lets us forget the abandonment of game in contemporary art—for moments of an art of parrhying. Melancholy facing a burst soap bubble usually only lasts a second, until the urge to play resumes and a new bubble ascends. Shattered hopes give rise to new attempts. This is what soap bubbles represent, also relating to art, because the effort of a new beginning is intrinsic to art. Art is the childhood of its thinking. To invent different images of difference and thus to claim art is subject to the call for a return to a childhood of thinking via sensations. Initial talking of an eternal new beginning, considering the usual case of failure: That is the beauty of a responsibility of forms, supposing that it is a "non-violent synthesis of the diffuse" and that it presents itself as an ability to respond before there is even a question, as an answer to questions that have not yet been posed. For example, a constellation of burst soap bubble illusions becomes form as a response-able Soap Bubble Painting radiating non-indifference for the other and enabling a miracle of giving—to see, to feel, to face, to think. In this sense, a good painting is a non-indifferent gift. Just like here.

But see for yourself, what Soap Bubble Paintings can do.

All this is accomplished and disappointed by the incommensurability and incommunicability of these paintings, because the goal of painting is indeterminate. That is why we will never get to the bottom of its most beautiful results. This is the reason for painting's discreteness and the condition of its beauty, assuming that it is a presence of beauty without embellishment. A good painting is characterized by the intensity of a visual presence, a power that deprives the painting of homogeneity by deflecting, differentiating and rupturing it, a power that enables the painting to dart a gaze of the non-identical at the observer. In this way, visual presence evokes a notion of difference regarding the nameless and the unforeseen. And let us not forget: "Fascination is the gaze of solitude." Opening up to this, one ultimately opens up to the inconsistency of anything that is regarded as truth and reality. That is where the existential seriousness of the Soap Bubble Paintings' playfulness can be encountered. For an "opening up to contingency can only happen in a playful way, because it is an opening up to a world game that lacks a final determination." In the words of Friedrich Nietzsche: "We have art so that we do not perish from the truth." Art that exposes itself to that is a strong game, which in contrast to the frivolous playfulness of a weak game, is characterized by an "amusing, capricious excitement" that comes up when a game has found a form that parties the abyss of ontological contingency. Jiri Georg Dokoupil is one of the artists who delight us with pictorial inventions of a strong game and lets us forget the abandonment of game in contemporary art—for moments of an art of parrhying. Melancholy facing a burst soap bubble usually only lasts a second, until the urge to play resumes and a new bubble ascends. Shattered hopes give rise to new attempts. This is what soap bubbles represent, also relating to art, because the effort of a new beginning is intrinsic to art. Art is the childhood of its thinking. To invent different images of difference and thus to claim art is subject to the call for a return to a childhood of thinking via sensations. Initial talking of an eternal new beginning, considering the usual case of failure: That is the beauty of a responsibility of forms, supposing that it is a "non-violent synthesis of the diffuse" and that it presents itself as an ability to respond before there is even a question, as an answer to questions that have not yet been posed. For example, a constellation of burst soap bubble illusions becomes form as a response-able Soap Bubble Painting radiating non-indifference for the other and enabling a miracle of giving—to see, to feel, to face, to think. In this sense, a good painting is a non-indifferent gift. Just like here.

But see for yourself, what Soap Bubble Paintings can do.

15 ibid., p. 19.
18 Marcus Steinweg: Inkonstistenzen, unveröffentlichtes Manuskript (Inconsistencies, unpublished manuscript), (Berlin 2014). (translated by SE)