

Well done: you are a true anarchist.
You are swiftly promoted to Editor-in-Chief!
THE END



THE FINISHING TOUCH

MICHAEL KREBBER didn't finish this interview. While discussing the nature of completion—and, of course, its counterpart—the conceptual German painter exercised his right to choose the endpoint of the conversation himself. It's similar to his method for deciding when to call his paintings to a close. Lines, splodges, and dripping details, canvases that highlight the blank space between their stretchers: Krebber's work questions the nature of the practice itself. When does a painting become a *painting*?

The set of Krebber's pieces on show earlier this year at the cavernous space at Greene Naftali in New York reflected this sense of suspended time. The paintings contained repeated gestures in bland beige brushstrokes that offered little resolution. It felt like Krebber holding off the urge to paint anymore, to keep the work as it must be: another line to join the first would be excessive. Or perhaps the painter felt scared to make a mistake. Would the (highly considered) sloppiness of the strokes be ruined with just one more?

Krebber worked as an assistant to renowned contemporary German artists Georg Baselitz and Martin Kippenberger in the '80s, after studying painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Karlsruhe. From 2002 to 2016, he held the position of Professor of Painting at the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main. But even if Krebber's work has been around for decades, his influence as a painter and teacher continues to influence generation after generation, anchored as it is halfway between the traditions of painting and the mythologised Cologne art scene of the '80s and '90s.

Krebber is known to call a work complete at the first available opportunity. So, once we began speaking, I happily bombarded him with questions. In addition to the queries below, I also wanted to know whether Krebber was interested in fashion, whether non-painting material—prints, photographs, textiles—affected how he worked, and if he could recall one piece or show that felt incomplete. But the answers to these questions remain suspended, too. Krebber replied in his final email that he thinks he has said enough. Well, *natürlich*.

Words LARA JOHNSON-WHEELER, Art MICHAEL KREBBER

BUFFALO ZINE: How important is an artist's timing?

MICHAEL KREBBER: Timing is a tool, given that being late or never arriving can also be called timing.

BUFFALO: Is the feeling of completion, of seeing a finished product, important to you?

MICHAEL: Yes. But not finishing something—if you are really doing it and not playing around—can be a higher luxury. Judging between these can get ideological, and I would try to avoid it.

BUFFALO: You've spoken of the need to 'walk away from a painting'. Can you explain what makes this important?

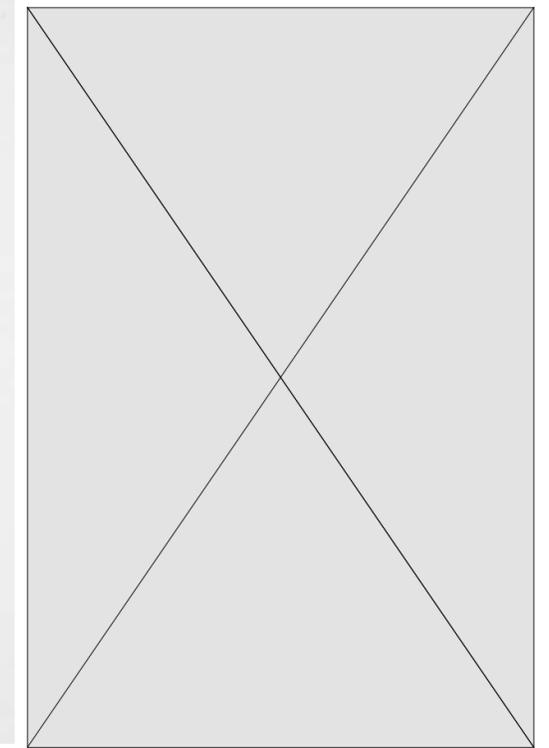
MICHAEL: I don't remember where I said this, but I would perhaps just think of walking away from a painting to try to recover to get the possibility of a fresh or different look. And again, the opposite—sticking to it—could also be very good.

BUFFALO: Your recent show at Greene Naftali felt complete in its entirety, but to many eyes, the individual canvases could seem unfinished. Is it important to you that the viewer understands what you are trying to do as a whole?

MICHAEL: To me these paintings were finished, but I also had a taste of what you are hinting at and it did not feel safe. Well, that is what I do sometimes. Your question sounds interesting, I don't think I always play it that far, although, yes, these things do happen. In both ways.

BUFFALO: Do you take 'accidents' in your stride when painting? How do you know when to add something more to a painting?

MICHAEL: I do take on accidents, and trying to avoid them must look terrible, but it could be interesting too. I do judge and censor permanently which is hard to avoid. I could say I have developed a technique for deciding when, or not, to add an element. For example, I try to achieve something, whatever that is, it does not work out, instead of trying to repair, which would be visible, I try to find a way out by searching for a kind of greatness or beauty or achievement in what is there already on the canvas that is not so great. Now, that I'm telling you this, I have no idea if I am successful with that at all. It is hard to prove but on the other side, these compositions have or can have an effect. The thin ice here lies in the fact that I can pretend I did or did not do this or that, and this is my more complete answer to your question. And I want to add that the direction of searching could immediately



Previous spread: *MK/M 2015/10*, 2015
This page, left: *MK/M 2014/16*, 2014
Right: *Miami City Ballet II*, 2010
[Courtesy Galerie Buchholz Berlin/Cologne/New York]

Opposite, clockwise from top left:
a ha?, 2001
MP-KREBM-00068, 2013
MP-KREBM-00119, 2018
Funny Cide 2, 2011
MP-KREBM-00077, 2013
[Courtesy Maureen Paley, London]

Reviewed by Buchholz/Maureen?

for
“I try to find a way out by searching a kind of greatness or beauty or achievement in what is there already on the canvas that is not so great.” — Michael Krebber

