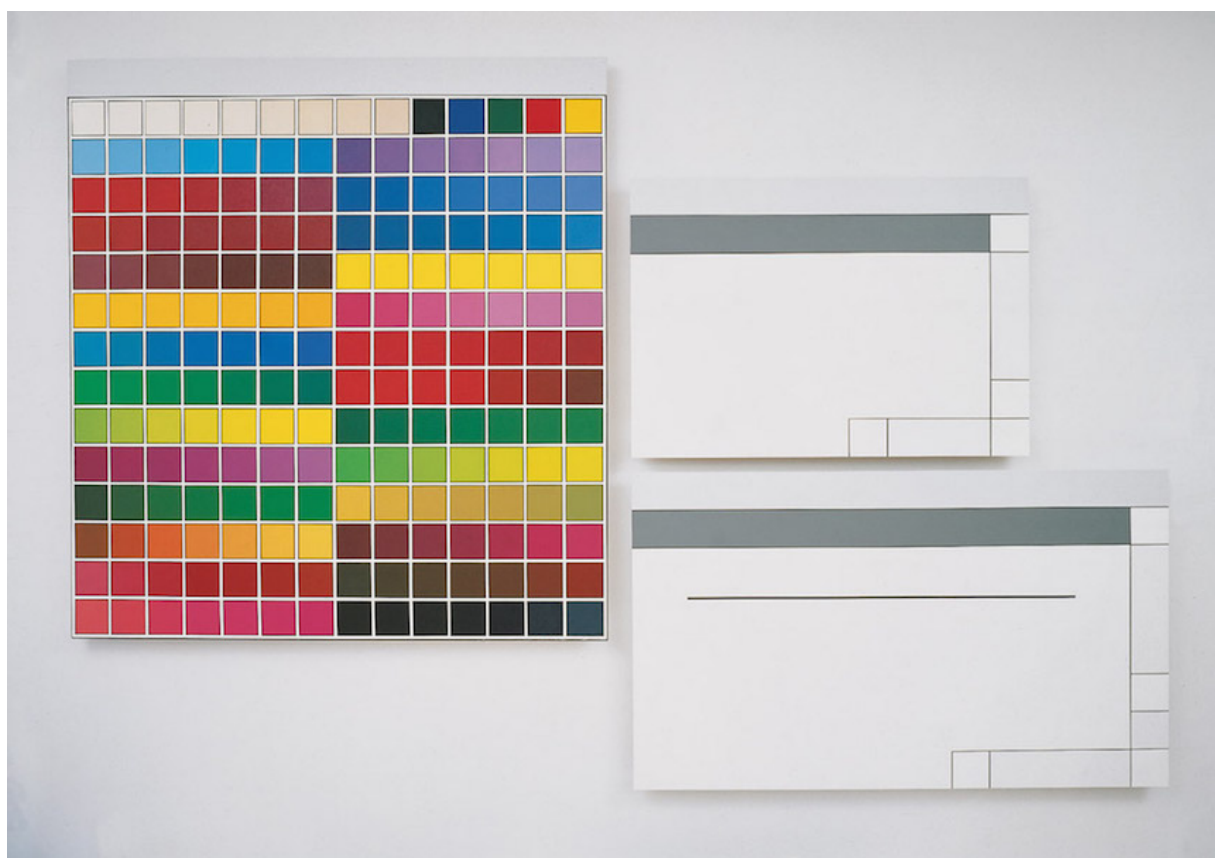


*From Minimalism and After: Tradition and
Tendencies of Minimal Art From 1950 to Today*

Renate Weihager et al.

Sammlung Daimler

Hatje Cantz, 2006



Michael Zahn

Palette with Objects, 2002

Acrylic on plexiglas in three parts

76 x 110 x 2.5 inches

In his paintings, Michael Zahn combines an idiosyncratic approach to an art historical horizon defined by the abstract avant-gardes with a typically consumerist preoccupation with surfaces, which today he sees expressed foremost in the machinations of the computer. Zahn's pictures from the

late '80s and early '90s initially transformed the binary code of programming languages into sequences of black and white stripes, decontextualized within a postindustrial digital framework. Since the mid '90s, he has worked on painterly translations of software's visible metaphors. His large-scale depictions of windows, menus, and progress bars hover in front of the wall, and the desktop is rearticulated as the paintings take on 'two-and-a-half dimensional' qualities within given architecture.

Zahn's paintings confront the onlooker with a generalized structure of the screen. The emptiness of many of these pictures, underscored by linear networks, illustrates the idleness of communication. In other words, when using the computer, there is no interaction, or no communication. Instead, use is regulated by a given program's parameters, which is why language is synthesized in the form of icons. Communication thus remains one-dimensional and autistic, and leads in a single direction from the program to the user. Zahn appropriates the inventions of interface design, and by transferring their appearance from virtual space to literal space, he discards their meaning. Icons thus become signs which retain their connotations, but not their function.