

Peter Reichenberger

Seipfel

Cologne

With this mini-retrospective of paintings and works on paper, a tantalizing profile of Peter Reichenberger (1945–2004) began to emerge. The artist devoted more than 30 years to perfecting an idiosyncratic painterly technique. Working primarily with his fingers and thumbs—but sometimes with his palm or the edge of his hand, his forearm, or his elbow—he created a kind of serial painting that was methodical and disciplined. At the same time, it also radiated an improbable, neo-baroque richness.

In part, this resulted from the artist's masterly use of color, which he studied and arranged with a passion no less intense than that of Josef Albers. For every work, Reichenberger executed a "score" in which each nuance and color progression was painstakingly composed, every tonal transition fully orchestrated, in row after row of his own colored fingerprints.

If finger painting suggests something spontaneous and intuitive, this oeuvre proves that the technique is equally suited to a disciplined, intricately structured procedure. The painter in some works covered a 6-by-9-foot canvas with meticulous rows of thumbprints, overlapping them with lighter or darker prints, followed by another layer of contrasting colors. Eventually, the individual fingerprints or palm prints vanish into a shimmering, undulating field of color. Compositions in pastel



Peter Reichenberger, *Handtellerabdruck, 0-90°*, 1994, oil on canvas, 76¼" x 57".
Seipfel.

NACHKLASS REICHENBERGER/GALERIE SEIPFEL, COLOGNE/OLAF BERGMANN

hues recalled the sun-drenched canvases of Pissarro or Seurat, while others toyed with the gaudy contrasts that are typical of Pop art.

Reichenberger never exhibited extensively, so this show offered an unprecedented opportunity to appraise his achievements. His reductionist approach inspired a seemingly inexhaustible series of pictorial hypotheses.

—David Galloway