

# BUYSSE

**Peter Krauskopf** (b. 1966, Leipzig) is an established German painter whose practice articulates abstraction as a durational, materially grounded process. Educated at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig between 1989 and 1995, Krauskopf completed his postgraduate studies as a Meisterschüler under Arno Rink until 1997. While his formation coincided with the emergence of the so-called Leipzig School, Krauskopf belongs to a generation that deliberately distanced itself from narrative and figurative tendencies dominant in that context, instead pursuing a sustained investigation into abstraction, surface, and temporality.

From the outset, Krauskopf's work has been shaped by a rigorous engagement with process. His paintings frequently originate from pre-worked or monochrome grounds that are subsequently reactivated through singular, decisive painterly operations. Broad strokes, dragged colour fields, compressed layers, and scraped surfaces—often executed using plexiglass squeegees of varying widths—function not as expressive gestures but as precise material interventions. Overpainting, abrasion, and reduction are central to his method, positioning each painting as a record of both accumulation and erasure, presence and disappearance.

Colour in Krauskopf's work operates as a material condition rather than a symbolic register. Intensely saturated hues coexist with restrained, near-monochrome fields, producing subtle tensions between opacity and translucency, depth and flatness. Earlier layers frequently remain partially visible, not as images but as latent traces, allowing the painting to function as a stratified field in which time, memory, and material resistance are embedded. The surface is never resolved into a final image; instead, it remains open, bearing the imprint of successive states.

A key articulation of Krauskopf's painterly logic is provided by art historian and critic **Jörg Heiser**, whose essay *The Dark Side of Power and the Light Parts of the Night* (2017) situates Krauskopf's work within a broader cultural, historical, and perceptual framework. Writing from the context of a studio visit, Heiser describes the painter's large-format works from the *Grünstein* and *Struktur* series as fields of horizontal squeegee strokes that generate "a regular, irregular sequence of soft transitions and harsh contrasts," evoking a liminal condition between night and dawn (Heiser, 2017). These paintings, marked by blue-black and grey tonalities, resist stable representation, instead oscillating between atmospheric suggestion and material abstraction.

Heiser emphasizes that the source imagery for these works is not pictorial in a traditional sense but experiential: an early-morning view from a window overlooking the Königssee in Bavaria, perceived during the so-called blue hour. Yet, as Heiser notes, this encounter is inflected by contemporary anxieties rather than romantic reverence for landscape. Krauskopf explicitly rejects a nostalgic alignment with Romanticism, instead situating the experience within a present marked by political unease and cultural fracture. In Heiser's reading, the

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paintings become a symbolic resonating space for diffuse fears circulating in contemporary German society, without collapsing into illustration or political commentary.

Crucially, Heiser insists that Krauskopf's paintings are not conceived as instruments of political intervention. Rather, they operate through what he describes as an "aesthetic sublimation" of complex emotional states—neither therapy nor direct critique, but a process of transformation made possible by long-term artistic practice (Heiser, 2017). The paintings do not claim to counter social or ideological forces; instead, they register tension, uncertainty, and instability at the level of perception and material structure.

This emphasis on relationality between works is central to Krauskopf's practice. As Heiser observes, individual paintings gain their full resonance only through variation and contrast. Large, dark canvases are frequently juxtaposed with smaller works that introduce different chromatic registers or structural logics. This dynamic, choreographic relationship between paintings is not a matter of stylistic variety but a deliberate compositional strategy extending beyond the single canvas. Krauskopf conceives of exhibitions as sequences in which paintings interact rhythmically, producing shifts in mood and perception across space.

To articulate this logic, Heiser draws an analogy with cinema, referencing filmmaker Ruben Östlund's assertion that aesthetic impact depends on the interruption of expectation rather than its fulfilment. In Krauskopf's case, moments of visual restraint are intensified through their contrast with passages of chromatic intensity or structural disruption. Paintings that appear subdued or even reticent function as critical counterpoints, sharpening the perceptual acuity with which more saturated works are encountered.

This principle is particularly evident in works where Krauskopf presses paint directly from the tube into scraped grid structures. In paintings such as *Kein Titel, B 211116* (2016), a seemingly neutral grey surface reveals itself, upon closer inspection, as a complex mixture of magenta, blue, titanium white, and red. A single vertical squeegee stroke generates a fine gradient that culminates in glistening white at the edges. This refined delicacy is subsequently disrupted by uneven grid structures and bold infill colours, producing what Heiser characterizes as a precarious balance between sublimity and banality (Heiser, 2017).

The technical precision underpinning these effects is central to Krauskopf's practice. Having studied under Arno Rink alongside artists such as Neo Rauch, Krauskopf early on defined his position in opposition to expressive figuration. His initial works took the form of minimalist wall objects, more sculptural than painterly. Approximately a decade later, he developed the layered squeegee technique that now defines his work, refining it through sustained experimentation with pressure, viscosity, drying time, and directional movement.

Krauskopf has described the decisive squeegee stroke as a moment of "blind flight," in which visual control gives way to embodied knowledge. Heiser interprets this not as a renunciation of seeing but as the result of years of intensive observation, comparable to the muscle memory of musicians or athletes. The apparent irony of a highly skilled painter relinquishing

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visual control is resolved through the understanding that such moments are grounded in long-term discipline rather than spontaneity.

By privileging the squeegee over the brush, Krauskopf initially bypasses gestural expression, only to reintroduce brushwork later within a strictly delimited framework. In works such as *Kein Titel, B 211216* (2016), restrained brushstrokes of light blue and salmon pink interact with an iridescent grey ground, activating chromatic depth without reverting to expressive gesture. Here, painterly marks function not as subjective traces but as calibrated interventions within a pre-established system.

Heiser situates Krauskopf's practice in relation to figures such as Karl Otto Götz and Gerhard Richter, while carefully distinguishing it from their approaches. While Krauskopf acknowledges Götz as a "great master," he rejects the vitalistic, room-filling gesture characteristic of Informel painting. Similarly, although Richter's early squeegee works offer a precedent for negating painterly handwriting, Krauskopf avoids the theatricalization of doubt that Heiser identifies in Richter's later practice. Instead, doubt functions in Krauskopf's work as a falsification principle: a refusal to settle for the superficial satisfactions of technical mastery.

This principle extends to Krauskopf's engagement with contemporary media culture. Heiser notes that certain paintings evoke the appearance of programmed digital surfaces, suggesting shallow pictorial depth while concealing vast spatial complexity. Krauskopf himself acknowledges the influence of digital interfaces and instantaneous visual gratification, not as objects of critique but as structural templates for understanding pictorial stimulus. In this sense, his exhibitions are conceived as environments that modulate attention through alternating moments of intensity and restraint.

Within this choreography, Krauskopf has identified a category of works he refers to as his "Bad Boys": paintings that approach monochrome reduction and visual denial. Often grey or black, these works appear inconspicuous at first glance but reveal subtle relief structures under sidelight. Far from being secondary, Heiser argues that these paintings function as critical catalysts within the overall body of work, pushing other paintings into sharper relief and serving as sites of future development (Heiser, 2017).

Krauskopf's work has been widely exhibited in institutional contexts, including the Albertinum Dresden, the Mies van der Rohe Haus in Berlin, Kunsthalle Lingen, and Kunsthaus Kaufbeuren. Further solo exhibitions have taken place at G2 Kunsthalle Leipzig, Caspar-David-Friedrich-Zentrum Greifswald, Walter Storms Galerie (Munich), Jochen Hempel (Berlin and Leipzig), and Galería Álvaro Alcázar (Madrid). Internationally, his work has been presented by Bluerider ART in Taipei, Shanghai, and London.

His paintings are held in major public collections, including the Albertinum / Galerie Neue Meister and the Kupferstich-Kabinett in Dresden, the Museum der Bildenden Künste Leipzig, the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg, the Sammlung des Deutschen

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Bundestages, the Ludwig Forum in Aachen, Museum Schloss Morsbroich in Leverkusen, and the Stiftung Moritzburg – Kunstmuseum des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt in Halle (Saale), alongside numerous private collections. In 2015, Krauskopf was awarded the Falkenrot Prize in Berlin, marking a significant moment of institutional recognition.

Today, Krauskopf lives and works in Berlin. His ongoing practice continues to refine a painterly language grounded in reduction, material discipline, and temporal awareness. His paintings resist immediacy, instead unfolding through sustained attention, inviting viewers into a space where perception, doubt, and material presence remain in constant negotiation.

## References

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