

Complete Fragments

Circles of different colours are arranged in rectangular fields. The circles, already incomplete in themselves, are not placed entirely within the fields but are cut through by them. Either segments are missing, as when one circular shape is partially superimposed over another, or they appear torn or broken. However, when there is an overlay, the borderless, overlaying elements are transparent, covering other forms, thereby creating further colours and producing darker framing lines at the edges.

The irregular, broken contours are one of the subtle elements that Pedro Boese introduces into a system initially based on geometric order and regularity. The basic underlying pattern, a parallel, serial arrangement, is still understandable for us as viewers but is constantly undermined by what we see.

Nevertheless, all the variations of the fragmented forms give the impression of compositional completeness, of inner coherence. Seeing fragments as imagined wholes has a long tradition, especially when dealing with damaged artefacts from antiquity. Although a torso, an arm or a leg may be missing, a unity of form is still perceived, and the violent destruction is repressed. Modernist geometric abstraction often suppresses the fact that abstraction is always abstraction from something: “real abstraction”, in the words of the Marxist theorist Alfred Sohn-Rethel.

But in another direction in Modernism, fragmentation is presented as real damage that also affects the human body, as can be seen in Expressionism, for example, in Otto Dix’s depictions of war invalids on the streets of Berlin in the 1920s. For art historian Linda Nochlin, best known for her research on Courbet and Realism, dismemberment and fragmentation are the central characteristics of Modernism.¹

Those who think of shards of antique patterned tiles when looking at Pedro Boese’s fragmented circles follow this reading, in which the fragmentation is seen directly as the result of actual destruction or its representation. This reading stands equally alongside a “classicist” one, which abstracts from real actions and consequences and sets the constellation of forms in an idealised universe with its own laws.

In this way, Pedro Boese manages to proverbially square the circle by reconciling realism and idealism. The silhouettes and surface effects with which he works seem to make his art absolutely “Instagrammable”. Simultaneously, the differentiated haptic quality and colour of the print and the transparent overlays are almost a celebration of the analogue - and hardly comprehensible in a minimised digital image.

¹ Linda Nochlin, *The Body in Pieces. The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity*, New York 2001.

The series *parallel* is an example of what cannot be digitalised, even today. Were an AI able to calculate all the variations of the circular forms and devise new ones, would it also be able to represent the material qualities that can be experienced in the original prints and calculate the inner coherence that makes the fragments appear complete to us?

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Translated by Heather Allen