

Max Ruf

Volumen und Kapazität

with a text by Angharad Williams

july 09 - aug 16 2021

die Treppe / Jan Kiefer, Basel

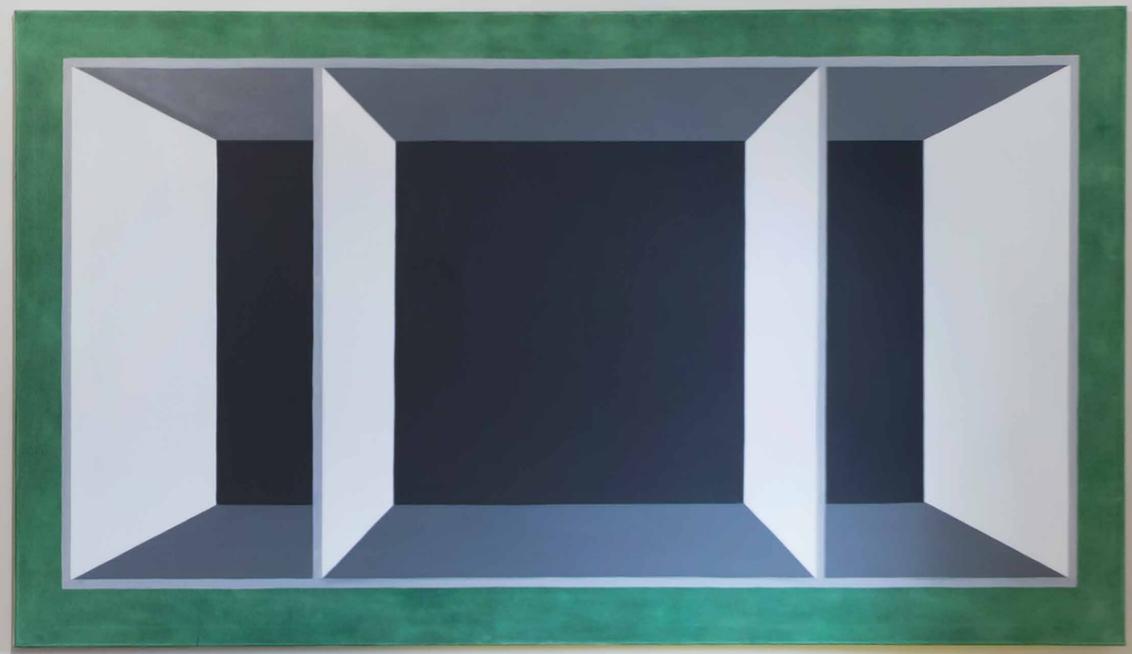


The last testament *and* will of me.

And so - well, here we are. For whoever will read this, here's the story of my life and what's left of it. There's not much to say about me but this - everything I was ever any good at I could never get paid for. I was married. Dwynwen was her name. We were neighbours as children. Childhood sweet hearts, and she was sickly sweet. I could not get enough. So sick was I - my father knocked a hole through the stone wall that separated our gardens so we could be even closer, no need to run out on to the road and around the houses but outside and through the garden. She was my first kiss, we smoked our first ciggies together - King Size Embassy Number Ones. Every infinitesimal detail of Dwynwen I can recall. I was good at that. I was good at loving her, and I think she knew it too. We got matching pet rabbits, and sat for hours posing them in various scenarios in her family caravan; later, in a shed her father built for her. I can recall the softness of their coats as we sang "Babyface" to them and rubbed their fluffy butts on our faces until our eyes ran. We established and ran a hugely successful hotel in our imagination and watched soap operas with the sound off so we could scour the credits for new names and visitors to our high-end spa-cum-rabbit-petting hotel. We even ran *away* once, we packed our bags, a tomato and some crisps and walked to the other side of the village and hid in my grandparents house. We had midnight snacks, which my father mistook for a series of break-ins. We worked on our book - *101 things to do with potatoes* - for years! The manuscript remains unpublished. That's in a box somewhere, I kept it - maybe you'll come across it. What's left now, I just don't know. Her hair was blonde and it was extremely thick. At some point perfume for little girls became available at the local pharmacy. When she saved up enough pocket money she bought a small bottle of Tommy Hilfiger. She was good at that - saving money. She would save all her pennies and mine too and buy us things. Pennie sweets at first, cherry lips, sour laces, my favourite was cola cubes, then nice things like little girl perfume and our own ciggies - less intense ones than the Embassies. We read in a magazine where to spray the perfumes but she didn't like it on her wrists spraying the perfume directly onto her scalp. It irritated her scalp so much that she would itch it bloody. For years she had brown waxy clumps under her nails and the skin around them stained red. We never paid much attention to our lesbianism until she overheard her parents arguing about how much time we spent in the shed. We went to the local library to look up the word. She was miserable at home, her parents argued constantly. For a time she lived with me in my house until she was moved up a year at school. She was really good at that - school. I got good at brushing her hair and peeling the scabs off her scalp. They moved away, Dwynwen and her parents but we remained penpals. Writing every day in a secret language only we could decode. She would put a pack of stamps weekly in Monday's envelope. My father left us. She started taking classes for "gifted children" it was called, and then to university earlier than all the other kids and was awarded a scholarship for doing so. As soon as her first payment went into her bank, she sent for me - a one-way bus ticket and off I went. I could never economize my enthusiasm for her and for being with her. I bid farewell to my mother who had focused her parenting energy on teaching me about botany. It was what *she* was good at. She was as good at it as Dwynwen was with numbers. We lived together in bliss at the university halls of residence, Mam didn't care that I had left her too. I did feel a terrible shame though, when we could not help her buy her house which I loved. I am sorry, Mam. Really. I wonder if that will reach you, how sorry I am? I wish I had been good at something to make the money to help you. Some solace can be gained - you didn't half have your health. Can't buy that, really. I wonder where shame is located in the brain? Not much use for such thoughts now, I should have told you before the mayhem. And what use of writing this? I heard some whisper of a resistance growing amongst the guards. A glimmer of hope. We got married. Dwynwen wasn't the only smart girl in her class but she worked hard. She graduated university and soon got a job at the local supermarket. Her skill with numbers was seeing where they were "leaking" as she called it and then plugging the holes. She got so good that headquarters sent for her. "Wastage" they called it. We moved to the city. One night we were invited to her boss' home for the Christmas party and as we walked into the party of home-owners I realized that besides being good at loving Dwynwen I had the uncanny ability to sniff-out home-owners. It was uncanny. Each had their own distinct scent. Embedded within the fibers of their clothes and in the liquid slackness of the ligaments connecting the limbs. The party - although uncomfortable socially, was rather a dense and rich bouquet to my nostrils. We were asked of course if we were sisters and what have you. Dwynwen was happy for me to make the flat nice and tend the plants, cook suppers and pack lunches. I asked her for an allotment and she kindly sought the advice of a colleague; "HR" they call it, and they could help me find one. With seeds sewn in March and April the summer production was packed with aubergines, an array of tomatoes, runner beans, beetroots and chili peppers - she loved chilies. We made chutneys together by the end of summer and so our garden was with us throughout the calendar year. I had a dream and in that dream we would be together forever. All the time we spent pottering at the allotment, they were the happiest moments of our lives. Watching as the tiny seeds turned into these majestic plants with branches, how their fruits sustained us was thrilling to me. It was my gift to her. My gift to Dwynwen for looking

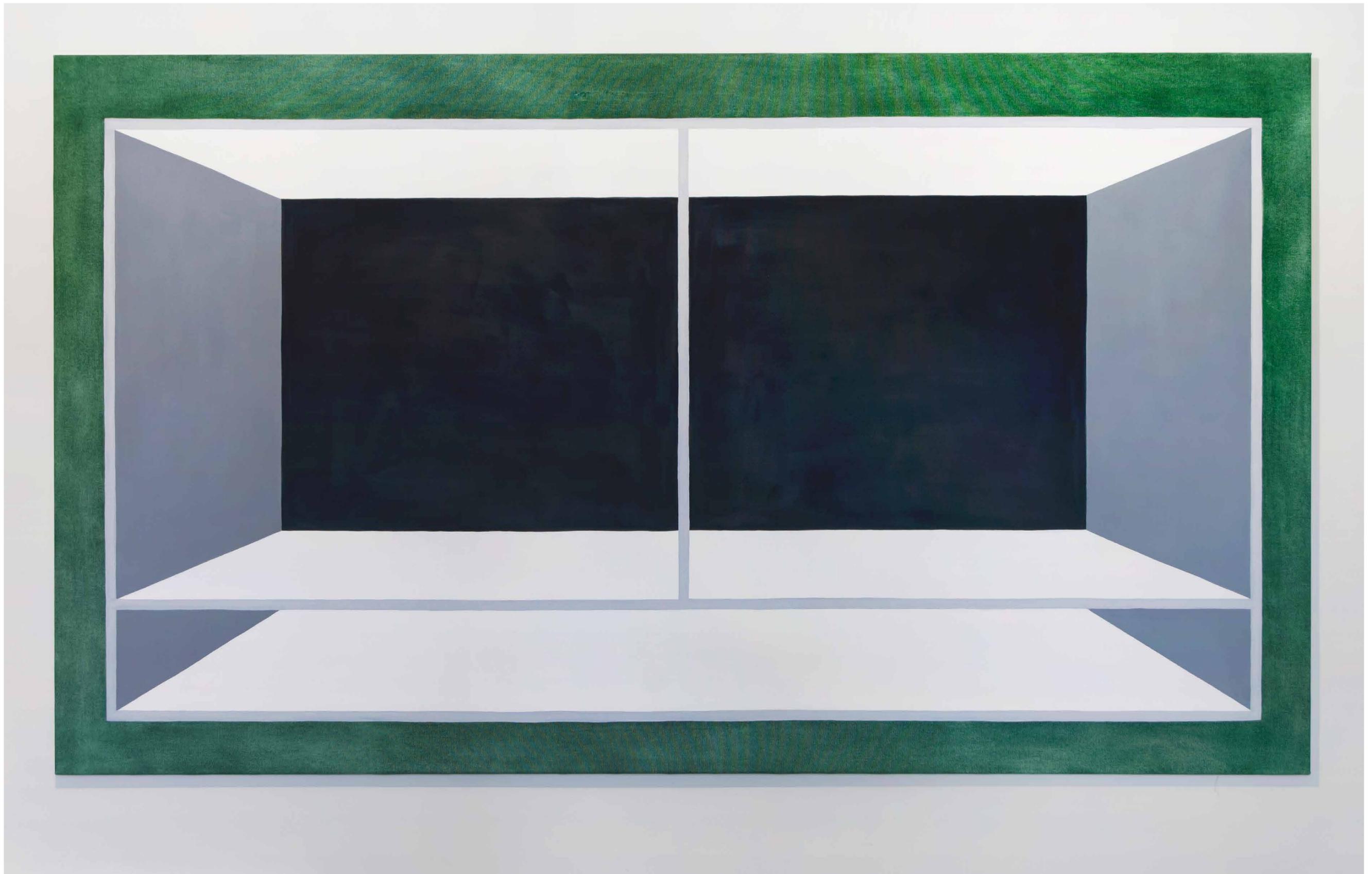
after us and buying Mam a camper van. Mam didn't want a house after the Zonings kicked in. When we were Zoned I was devastated. I could no longer gain access my original allotment with my lovely neighbors but was given a replacement within our Zone. It was gated. I never met the neighbors. I hope these pages will not be burnt. There must be someone. Guard, have compassion. The Zoning extended to Dwynwen's workplace and she and her colleagues were placed in individual cubicles in the office. "Efficiency" they called it. Misery is what I called it. Soon she no longer wanted to be intimate as the demands of work became too great, it took an incredible toll on her body. It needed to do so much for her, it could not me mine too. And I could not even make it feel nice. I continued to make packed lunches. We no longer enjoyed long weekends at the garden as she had only Sundays for rest and she slept throughout that day, waking seldom for me to feed her avocados, nuts and eggs before returning to a deep sleep. She was longer at the office. I was every day at the garden. The tinkering became an obsession. I grew apple trees and crossed them with others, inventing new fruits at a surprising rate. Dwynwen didn't like them. "Weird" was how she described my pastime. Soon she wasn't eating solids at all. "Calorific" she said and asked me one tender evening to make her daily smoothies that she would take in a specially sewn backpack that work gave her. They gave her the bottles too. And the smoothie maker. And individual frozen packs to make the smoothie. Within half a year someone took away the machine replacing it with morning and supper juices dropped in weekly crates. I forgot how to cook and ate a diet of raw or cooked veg from my garden, alone. My Dwynwen went from plump and pert, quick to baste in the sun: to ashen faced and monosyllabic. One day she arrived home with a terrible dynamic and pronounced me a "loser" in a rage-filled argument as it had slipped my mind to take out the trash. A loser is a winner in house of lies. All of a sudden she did not see my work at home as exactly that and I began to long for something else. I experienced a desire for something. Dwynwen was denied a mortgage on the apartment. There was an enormous surplus at the garden, and I could not eat it all myself. I left a lovely selection outside the door of my locked garden - they sat rotting. Next at the street, zone-square, skateboarding park, all rotten. More were joining the smoothie regime. One Sunday night under cover of darkness I found an opening at a fence to a neighboring Zone and left a basket-full there. Baskets turned to crates. Whatever I could carry. Sometimes I received notes. "Thank you" they said. We made a special request for my mother to join us at our Zone. Dwynwen would not let her live in the flat with us "bills" she said. Mam lived in the garden house. Dwynwen's wages got docked which meant I could no longer buy new seeds and was required to sew from my fruits seeds. We pollinated all sorts, me and Mam. We generated an array of new specimen, which we picked, drew and studied. There was little in place with regards to a plan, this is the truth. In the absence of a public defense you must believe me. One day, a remarkable discovery was made. Growing from our pot-luck row (a series of experiments and miss-labeled cross pollinations) we noticed minute shiny droplets hanging from the spindly branches of 6 small plants that were growing at speed. The branches were buckling due to the weight of their wee golden nuggets so we made a structure and delicately strung the little tree to its bamboo host. With hand on heart the experimentations in the garden were precisely this: true in intention. I let my hands do my thinking and perhaps it was shame's gravity that put those pieces together. As the days and weeks unfolded the droplets turned into coins. Money from all the worlds' currencies grew and with a gentle shake of the loaded branches they would fall onto the ground. We collected the coins studying each in incredulity - we could make no sense of this nature's force. As the trees grew paper notes curled off the bark and I peeled them off like I peeled Dwynwen's scalp when we were children. With every note I recalled our conversations, our childhood scenarios. The reminiscing was poison. Mam and I, we had no idea if the money was to standard, but they had all the markings! I had not held notes in my hands for so long, and decided to make a test. She dared me, Mam and with two 50 notes I bought Dwynwen a Tommy Hilfiger perfume as a surprise. I did not immediately give her the bottle, rather Mam and I made a plan, we noticed that a pattern where the seed for replanting was unsheathed at twilight. At dead of night we left the sprouting pots at the Zone barrier along with other fruits. We continued for weeks. Notes came "the trees GROW". At our anniversary (the dates of which had been debated for years); I gave Dwynwen her Tommy bottle. She was furious and demanded to know how I afforded the potion. "You have to see it to believe it" I said, gleefully. There is little I regret more than showing my love my invention. Tears rolled out of her eyes at an alarming rate. There is such love between time and money. Dwynwen told HR about my garden and the next night I heard a symphony of chain saws echo in the distance. I was no longer to return to the garden. Mam escaped through the Zone barrier. I was questioned. It was like I was a criminal! But, "we made money grow on trees!" I would say! So virulent were the trees roots that the earth required scorching, its like the root itself bonded with the earth beneath and so this is what HR preferred: a scarred earth incapable of bearing fruit. Oh, where are you, Dwynwen? I see no green outside of my small window. Funny how differently people see the same thing. This darkness in this here gaol, the black here is not entirely dark...





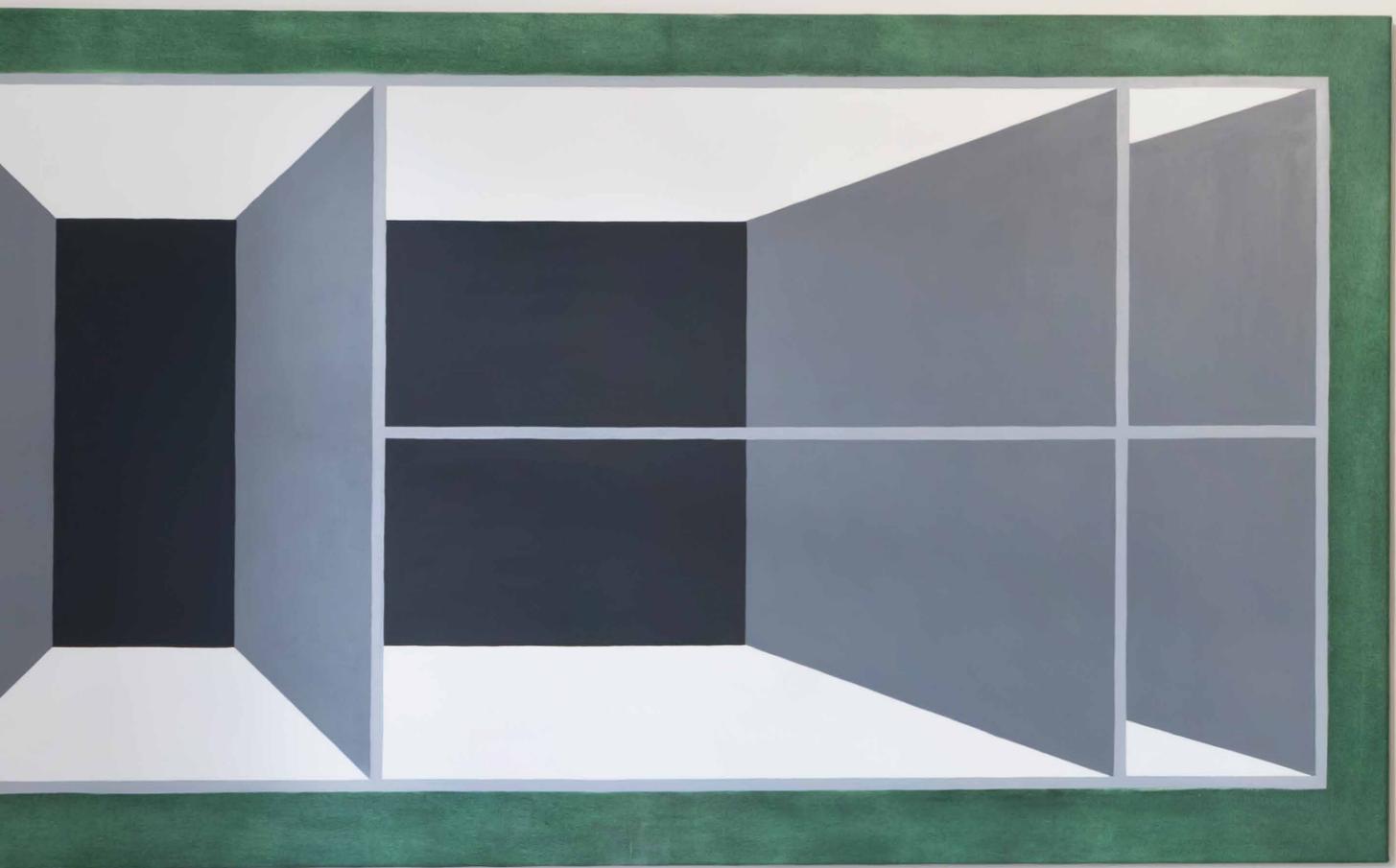


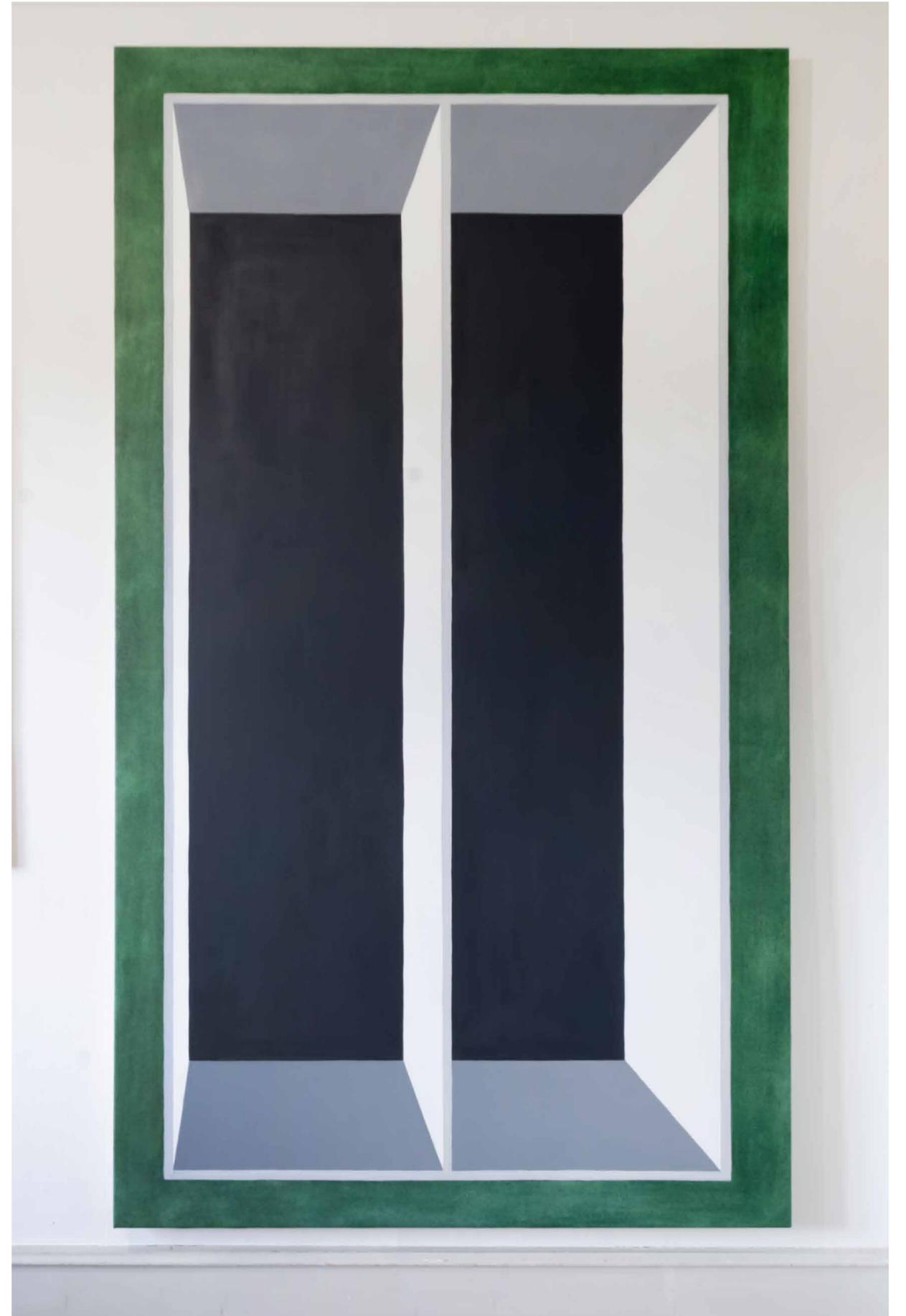






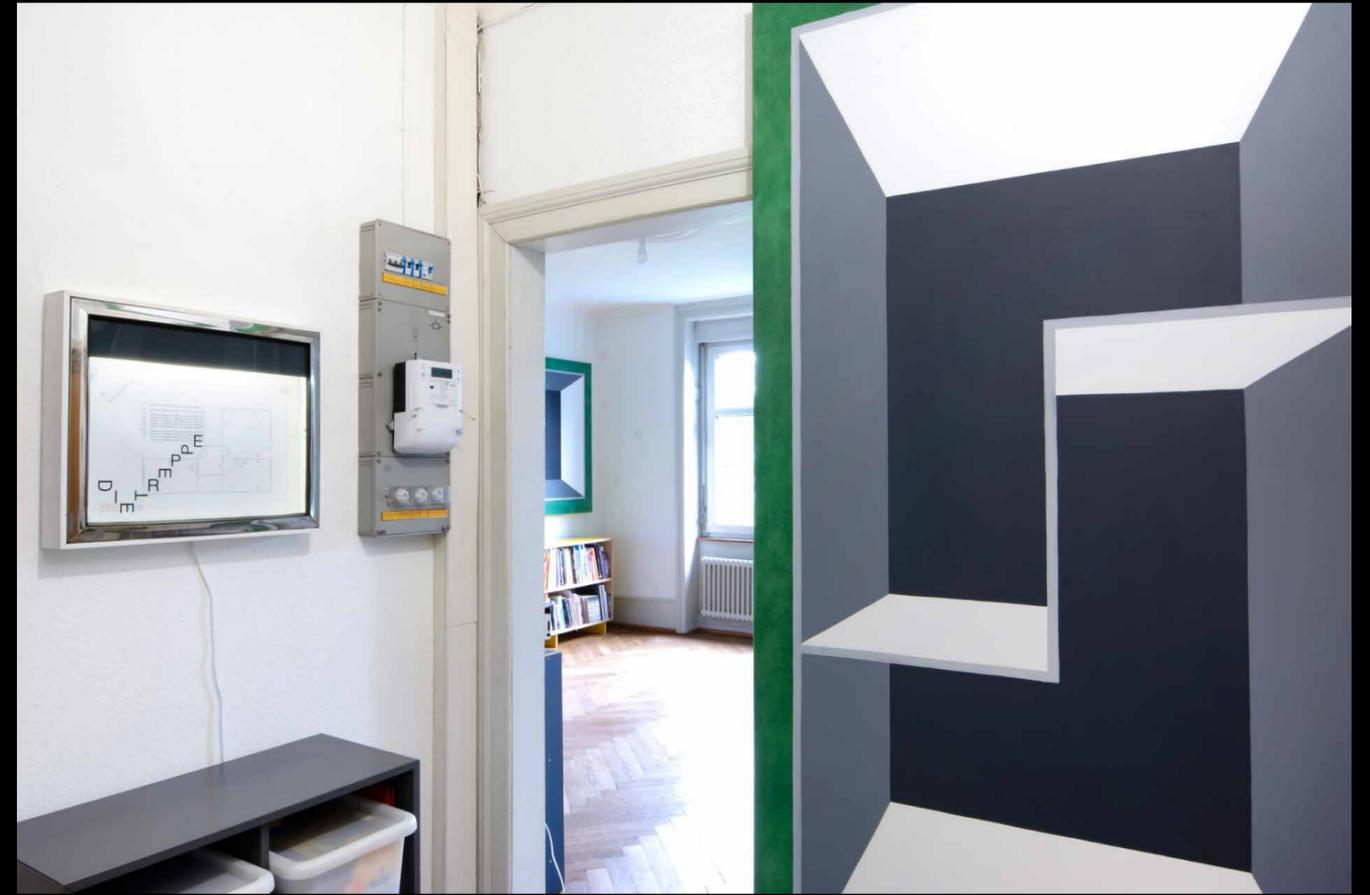
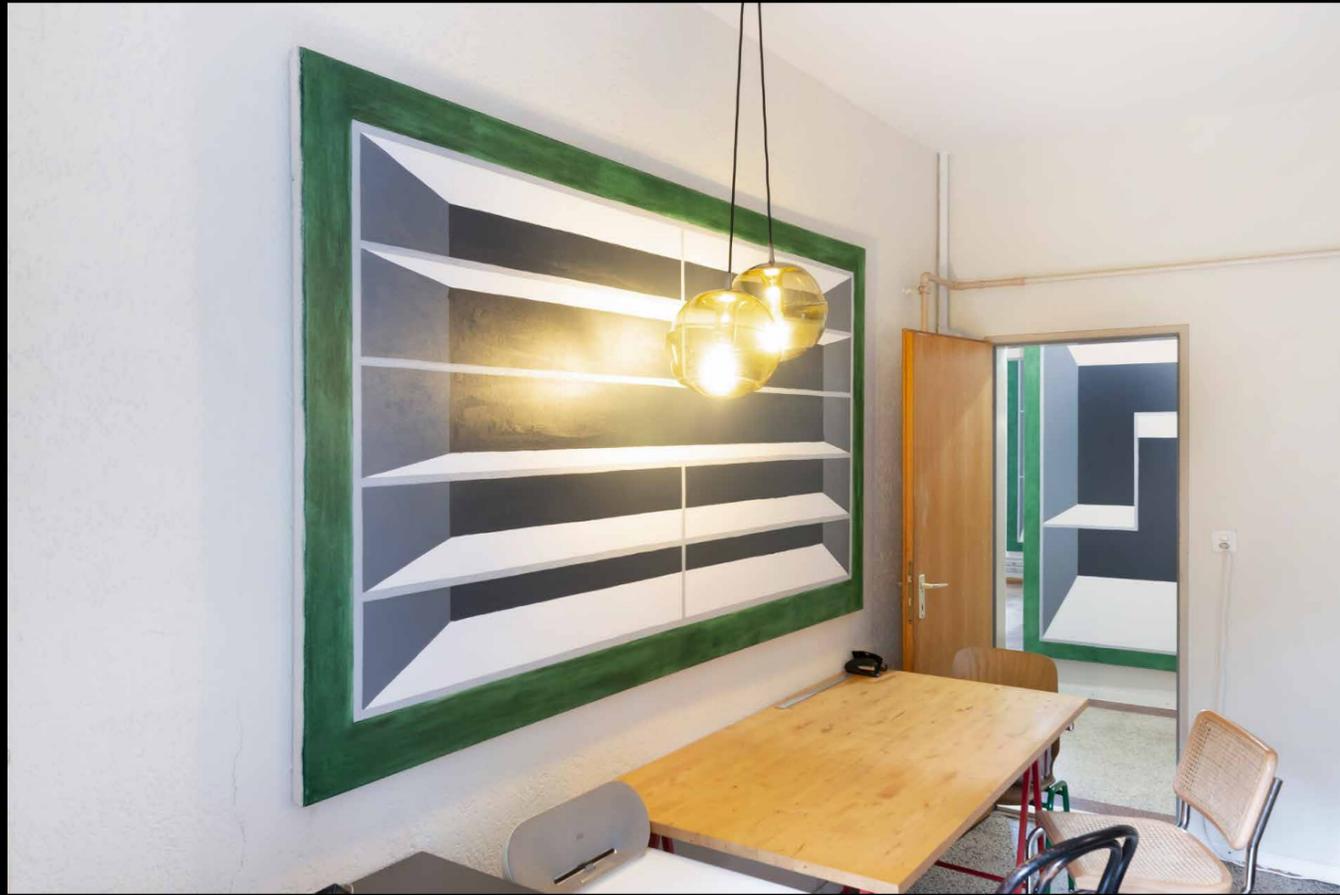














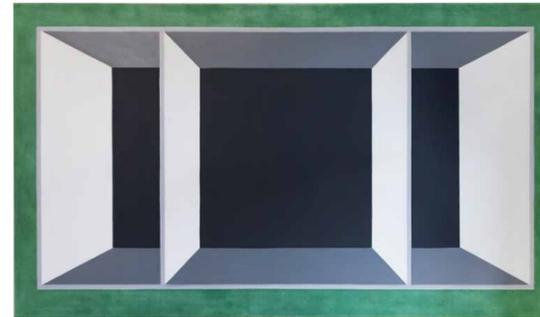
01 Volumen und Kapazität, 2021
oil on canvas, 130x230 cm



04 Volumen und Kapazität, 2018
oil on canvas, 130x230 cm



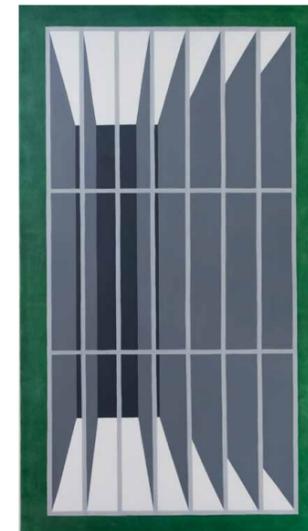
02 Volumen und Kapazität, 2017
oil on canvas, 230x130 cm



05 Volumen und Kapazität, 2021
oil on canvas, 230x130 cm



03 Volumen und Kapazität, 2018
oil on canvas, 230x130 cm



06 Volumen und Kapazität, 2021
oil on canvas, 130x230 cm



07 Volumen und Kapazität, 2017
oil on canvas, 130x230 cm



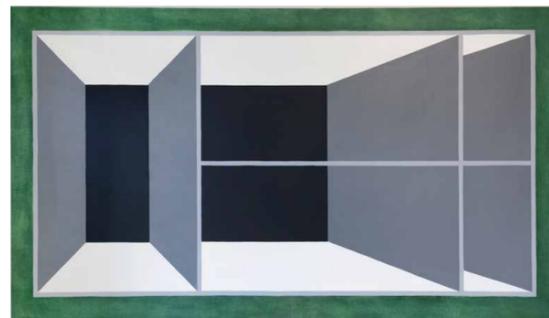
10 Volumen und Kapazität, 2018
oil on canvas, 130x230 cm



08 Volumen und Kapazität, 2017
oil on canvas, 130x230 cm



11 Volumen und Kapazität, 2016
oil on canvas, 130x230 cm



09 Volumen und Kapazität, 2018
oil on canvas, 230x130 cm