

Autochrom

„RGB“

How can three complementary elements be reconciled in such a way as to form a new symbiotic whole? A process dating back to the days of early colour photography provides an idea of how to do that. The „autochrome“ technique, going back to the Lumière brothers in the early 20th century, is based on the fact that by dithering the three colours red, blue and green all other colours can be derived and, thus, complex colour photographs can be produced. Autochrom is also the name of saxophonist Luise Isabel Volkmann's new trio together with bassist Athina Kontou and drummer Max Santner. The three of them are well-travelled. Luise Isabel Volkmann is originally from Bielefeld, she lived in Berlin for a short while and in Paris for a long while to continue via Kopenhagen and Leipzig, finally ending up in Cologne. Athina Kontou has Greek roots, grew up in Frankfurt am Main and Athens and now lives in Leipzig. Max Santner is originally from Austria and has unpacked his drumsticks in Berlin. Three paths of life dithered together to form a common narrative in Autochrom.

Autochrom's music is best described as a complementary symbiosis. So what could be more obvious than to name their common debut album „RGB“? Volkmann herself represents red, Kontou is green and Santner embodies blue. The starting point for the trio was Luise Volkmann's big formation *été large*, with which the composer and saxophonist released the epic album "Eudemonia" in 2017. With it, she already established herself as a fantastic storyteller. She had already worked together previously with Athina Kontou on several projects. It seemed just logical that this bassist with a clear view of the big picture would also be part of *été large*. She got to know Santner, a mischievous pointillist, through *été large*. When deciding for the small format after the big formation, she took both of them with her on this new journey. Topographical, biographical and personal elements come together on "RGB" to become a finely granulated snap shot where every single aspect melts into the big picture. *"Berlin, Leipzig and Cologne are important stages in my life", Luise Volkmann summarizes. "My musical development in Germany mostly took place in these three cities. Most artists with whom I cooperate in Germany live in Berlin, Leipzig and Cologne. My music is always very autobiographic. I try to stay in touch with what moves me. After all, even the choice of musicians with whom you choose to work is autobiographic. These are always people with whom you have travelled for a certain time artistically and personally and that can provide what you want to express with your music."*

And indeed, she has a lot to tell. As a musician with a zest for life she has a weak spot for anecdotes, no matter whether they stem from films, books, comics or her personal perception of everyday life. She picks up on things that are on her mind, be it personal or general matters. Her musical stories always have a background. When she starts playing music with her two band mates, you quickly forget what instruments you are hearing. All three of them bring

something to the table, they intuitively assume responsibility without however trying to upstage the others. The impulse in their playing continuously shifts between the protagonists. The story, though, is at the focus at all time and the three musical basic colours serve to depict it in the best way possible. *“As a composer, I’m more interested in the orchestra than the soloists.”* says Volkmann. *“Based on my human and ideological orientation, I believe in collectivity and community. Society is focusing far too much on the individual. In jazz, too, it’s always about the band leaders. For me, it is much more important that there are bands, as in rock music, that work as an orchestra. During rehearsals we have worked hard on everyone assuming their responsibility.”*

On their journey to achieve this collectivity, the trio has done a lot of sound exploration. During this process, the most diverse questions surged and answers to them were painstakingly searched for. How can the saxophone be made to sound like a bowed bass? How can you screech on the cymbals the way you can on the saxophone? It was not about differentiation but about fusing the different sound sources. Music as an integrational process as is the case for the colour pigments in an autochrome photography.

But this fusion process goes even deeper and here is where another philosophical aspect comes into play. In jazz, most musical personalities make a fundamental choice for either an abstract way of playing or one that emulates life. With Autochrom, what prevails is an intellectual everyday routine which is something you encounter very seldom with such self-evidence. The songs are perfectly suitable for everyday listening without renouncing on abstract moments. Luise Volkmann gathered her rich fund of anecdotes through selective research, as she herself calls it. *“I like the wisdom of the situation, no matter whether it’s about a philosophical or a human context. This is how you can bring up the biggest questions. There is an incredible poetry in it that will always trigger something. It is mainly this kind of intellectuality as a form of expression in music that I can very much relate to.”*

In addition to that, there is a playful seriousness or a serious playfulness, whichever you prefer because two opposite directions of movement result from it, nevertheless ending in the same point. All three musicians take their music very seriously and this is exactly why they enjoy it so much. In this way, the pieces sound very spontaneous and compact in spite of all the different ideas and motives that are very finely intertwined. Luise Volkmann describes this process as a mix of impatience and experience. Before they were recorded, she has gone through a relatively intense phase of experimentation with the songs. She laid a foundation of parameters like the band sound and a form that is compact and danceable but still leaves enough space for moments of improvisation. Only once the esthetical framework was set, did the actual pieces come together. *“I’m strongly marked by rock music and I want to write real songs. A lot can happen there, the whole song structure might even get unravelled but there*

should always be a theme that moves me in that moment. It might as well be an emotional theme that inspires me just then.”

Enough said. No instruction leaflet is required for Autochrom’s music, it tells its own story. Open your ears and jump right in at the deep end – you’ll know everything that can be said about this music.