

Daily Acts

BY HENNY CLAMOR

Peter Dreher was born the same year as Gerhard Richter, but came to his subject more than a decade later than his contemporary. In 1974, at the age of 42, Dreher began to paint a water glass, at first once, and then the same thing again, and then again and again. Set on a white tablecloth against a white wall, with uniform light, one series was painted by day and the other by night. The repetition, resulting in nearly 5000 individual paintings to date each entitled *Tag um Tag guter Tag (Day by Day good Day)*, transforms the subject matter. It obliterates the glass itself, and turns the act of painting into the primary subject. But it also reveals the glass, rendering it afresh with every new version, as if seen for the first time.

Painting for Dreher is a physical thing, a concrete activity—but also the desire to disappear into the act of creation itself: an attempt to make something so simple, so real and obvious, that it would become invisible. In the artist's own words, "It is the desire to reach a state in which I give in entirely to creating, to concentrating on abandoning myself to the object in front of me, forgetting every thought of me or about me, empty and at the mercy of something else. Absence of the 'I', obliteration of the self." (*Peter Dreher, Tag um Tag guter Tag (Day by Day good Day)*, 1974 - 2012, P420, Bologna). He has compared his activity to Zen Buddhism—although he acknowledges that he comes from a Western cultural background—like the art of the journey, an act of humility, and a way of losing oneself in the liberating process of doing the same thing over and over. And yet, the resulting paintings are surprisingly satisfying, each relevant and valid in its own right. They never set out to put forward a concept, but portray real objects and images of the real.

Looking back, Dreher reflects on his evolution: "The Sixties. I didn't like the society I lived in. The frenzied activity, superficiality and vulgarity, the talking for talking's sake. My painting had to rebel against many of the things that surrounded me. I wished to paint an invisible painting."



Tag um Tag guter Tag (Day Series) #22 (1981) | ACTUAL SIZE



TOP ROW LEFT TO RIGHT: *Tag um Tag guter Tag (Day Series)* #668 (1992), #796 (1993), #1261 (1996), #1389 (1997)
BOTTOM ROW LEFT TO RIGHT: *Tag um Tag guter Tag (Day Series)* #1551 (2000), #1872 (2004), #2043 (2006), #2044 (2006)





TOP ROW LEFT TO RIGHT: *Tag um Tag guter Tag (Night Series)* #70 (1975), #233 (1978), #488 (1982) #798 (1987)
BOTTOM ROW LEFT TO RIGHT: *Tag um Tag guter Tag (Night Series)* #1077 (1992), #1559 (1998), #1800 (2000), #1946 (2002)





Tag um Tag guter Tag (Night Series) #2579 (2010) | ACTUAL SIZE