Denda's sophisticated use of color forms can be clearly seen in the most intricate of five pictures and objects in this second exhibition at Johnen, the "Hex" (holly). The background is already divided into four equal-sized yellow picture squares (paper on wood); This division into four parts is confirmed by a decorated decorative wheel placed in the middle. A carpet of fine, green holly branches spreads over the remaining surfaces in such a way that, apart from the narrow central cross, a uniform image structure is created. Since it doesn't unroll in a stereotypical sequence like a wallpaper pattern, it disrupts the order without appearing untidy. The intricate geometric ornament, which could also be a stylized sun wheel or a flower calyx, In contrast to the hex, it is fictitious and belongs to a different motif category. It even spatially breaks through the plant pattern with its blue sky depth, but on the other hand ties the endlessly expandable wall motif together.

The artist often plays off at least two pictorial symbols against each other and incorporates the ground almost equally through color and division. The combined shapes and figures work in opposite directions; one motif tames another, which unbridledly takes over the picture surface, for example four large red balls each capture four smaller yellow ones from a dancing crowd on a blue surface. Acrobats, hanging monkeys and playing bears, on the other hand, loosen up a strictly ornamental grid. Complicated silhouette-like figures such as dancers, birds or salamanders have fun with balls, tires, leaves or tendrils. The game ends in a draw – in beauty and harmony. Minimal positional deviations are enough to disrupt a stupid sequence in a sensitive and at the same time invigorating way.

Elke Denda creates her pictures, objects and Bauhaus-related musical costumes in a carefree and stylish manner (with Bettina Elmpt 1984/85). Behind happy juggling there are calculations and questions with a hidden meaning: Can everything be used as an ornament, what meaning can an ornament acquire, can it exist without context, does a thing only become an ornament through repetition, is an ornament even sufficient as a pretext for an image? Elke Dendas encourages confidence in its expression and beauty value.

Renate Puvogel