

PAW

Gallery information

PAW

Exhibitions

WOULD YOU STILL LOVE ME IF I WAS A WORM?

02.12.-05.01.24

Iris Helena Hamers, Lucia Mattes

GET IN SHAPE GET COLOR

28.10.-24.11.23

Ulrich Okujeni

MOUNT PETROL

16.09.-19.10.23

Nino Maaskola

WHO MADE MY CAT TWO-DIMENSIONAL?

24.06.-28.07.23

Antonia Freisburger, Stefanie Popp,
Sophie Ullrich

CALL ALEXANDER, HE KNOWS WHAT TO DO

29.04.-09.06.23

Stefan Jeske

VOL 1

11.03.-21.04.23

Stefan Jeske, Nino Maaskola, Ulrich Okujeni,
Miriam Schmitz, Johanna Wagner

WOULD YOU STILL LOVE ME IF I WAS A WORM?

02.12.-05.01.24

Iris Helena Hamers, Lucia Mattes

The exhibition „Would you still love me if I was a worm“ brings together two artists, Iris Helena Hamers and Lucia Mattes, who deal with images and forms of expression on the internet and translate them into multi-layered works. The starting point for both positions is often the digital object - an image, a meme, a video, which finds a new, sometimes surprising materiality in the works.

Lucia Mattes creates her works with felt, thus contrasting the fast pace of net culture with a lengthy manual process. In her work „Would you still love me if I was a worm?“ (2023), she spans a wide temporal arc and merges various motifs that are as disparate as possible. The illustration is taken from a medieval herb book and shows a so-called draconopedes, a snake-like creature with a female head. However, the eye trained less on medieval zoological depictions and more on current popular and everyday culture immediately recognizes Heidi Klum in her Halloween party worm costume from 2022. Both the Heidi Klum worm photos and her question on Instagram „Would you still love me if I was a worm?“ have been taken up and developed further in numerous memes and are examples of the life of their own that virtual phenomena often develop at breakneck speed. In Mattes' felt work, the central image is framed by several blocks of text that invite a dialog: „what are your thoughts on heidi klum?“

The work „To Nihilisa Frank“ (2023) refers to a „veteran of meme culture“, as Mattes puts it. The Tumblr Nihilisa Frank emerged in 2015 and took up the pop imagery of the Lisa Frank Inc. universe: brightly colored little animals - unicorns, pandas, dolphins - that were mainly found in US children's rooms in the 1990s. Nihilisa Frank added nihilistic quotes to them and turned the sugar-sweet childhood memories into bearers of statements that were not very cheerful. Mattes takes up the genesis of these image-text combinations, adds her own layers of content and invites us to think about the work further by replacing the last word „cum“ with our own punchlines.

Iris Helena Hamer's artistic practice revolves around questioning the medium of painting: in several groups of works, she explores its limits and possibilities and creates complex, dream-like pictorial worlds that are anchored in the artist's subjective experience but open up to the associations of the viewer. Here, too, we encounter the (Klumian) worm: In „Heidi“ (2022), he meanders headlessly across the entire picture surface, while zombie girls

stalk towards the viewer in the background. While the depth of the pictorial space in classical painting is created by painterly means, in this work three differently painted acrylic glass panes are mounted one behind the other, creating a front and back. They are held together and at the same time separated from each other by large steel clamps, thus revealing the construction of the work. Similar to Mattes, Hamers also refers in her work to fragments of popular cultural knowledge that we acquire on our forays through the Internet. Once again, the viewer is invited to think further about the narrative suggested by the set pieces and - if they wish - to place Heidi, the worm and the zombie girls in their own context.

In the installation „My strange harvest will taste sweet again“ (2023), Hamers places AI-generated motifs in a dialog with self-generated representations: She manipulates digital found footage in digital painting, feeding her own images into AI programs so that they become the starting point for artificially intelligent further development. The result makes it impossible to distinguish between human and machine-created images. The resulting motifs are printed onto cut aluminum plates using UV printing and finally join together in space to form their final composition. Hamers thus transforms the digital works into actual objects and enables us to interact with them in a new, more direct, more physical way. She creates a wild dream world whose surfaces appear sometimes slippery, sometimes velvety, sometimes metallic. In it, the viewer searches for a context, for a narrative that connects the individual fragments. And which, as in „real“ digital life, often does not exist.

Text: Ferial Nadja Karrasch



GET IN SHAPE GET COLOR

Ulrich Okujeni

28.10.-24.11.23

Walking a tightrope with contour

Ulrich Okujeni is not a painter who follows a rigid concept. He combines his pictorial with spontaneous ideas that arise as a reaction to intermediate states of the works. It is a constant interplay of proactive and reactive elements that make up his everyday creative life. Thus the exhibition title can be understood as a subtle reference to the strength- and idea-sapping work process during the painting process. Painting becomes the taming of material, which must be brought into the right form and color to become art. GET IN SHAPE GET COLOR, however, could also be understood as a call of a general nature, a humorous commentary by the artist on the omnipresent striving for efficiency and individualization.

Three basic painterly elements are central to Okujeni's approach: lines, planes, and colors. The lines form the basis. They form arcs and circular movements, testify to dynamics and inner tension. Corners arise mostly from intersections of two lines. By „following a line without abrupt changes of direction“ the artist tries to „allow a flow in seeing“. The surfaces are formed by the line progressions, they are virtually the resulting product. The spectrum of paint application ranges from very thinly applied areas where the canvas shimmers through to impasto, powerful passages. Okujeni's approach contains reminiscences of the New York School and the associated beginnings of abstract expressionism in the early 1940s. The black contour lines, formative of his current work, were used extensively at the time, including by Arshile Gorky, Wilhelm de Kooning, and somewhat later Helen Frankenthaler. In the fine balancing of abstract and representational elements, a connection to Gorky and de Kooning can also be discerned, who - each in their own way - also faced the painterly struggle for the fine balance.

With its dimensions of 200 x 340 cm, the work Pangea Ultima dominates the main room of the exhibition. Partially, figures seem to flash up, but for the most part they quickly disappear again in the tangles of the play of lines. Here Okujeni resorts to a tried and tested interplay: while some areas contain narrative echoes, in this case triggering associations with science fiction worlds, for example, other passages are explicitly non-representational, a firework of forms and colors without a narrative level. Pure painting.

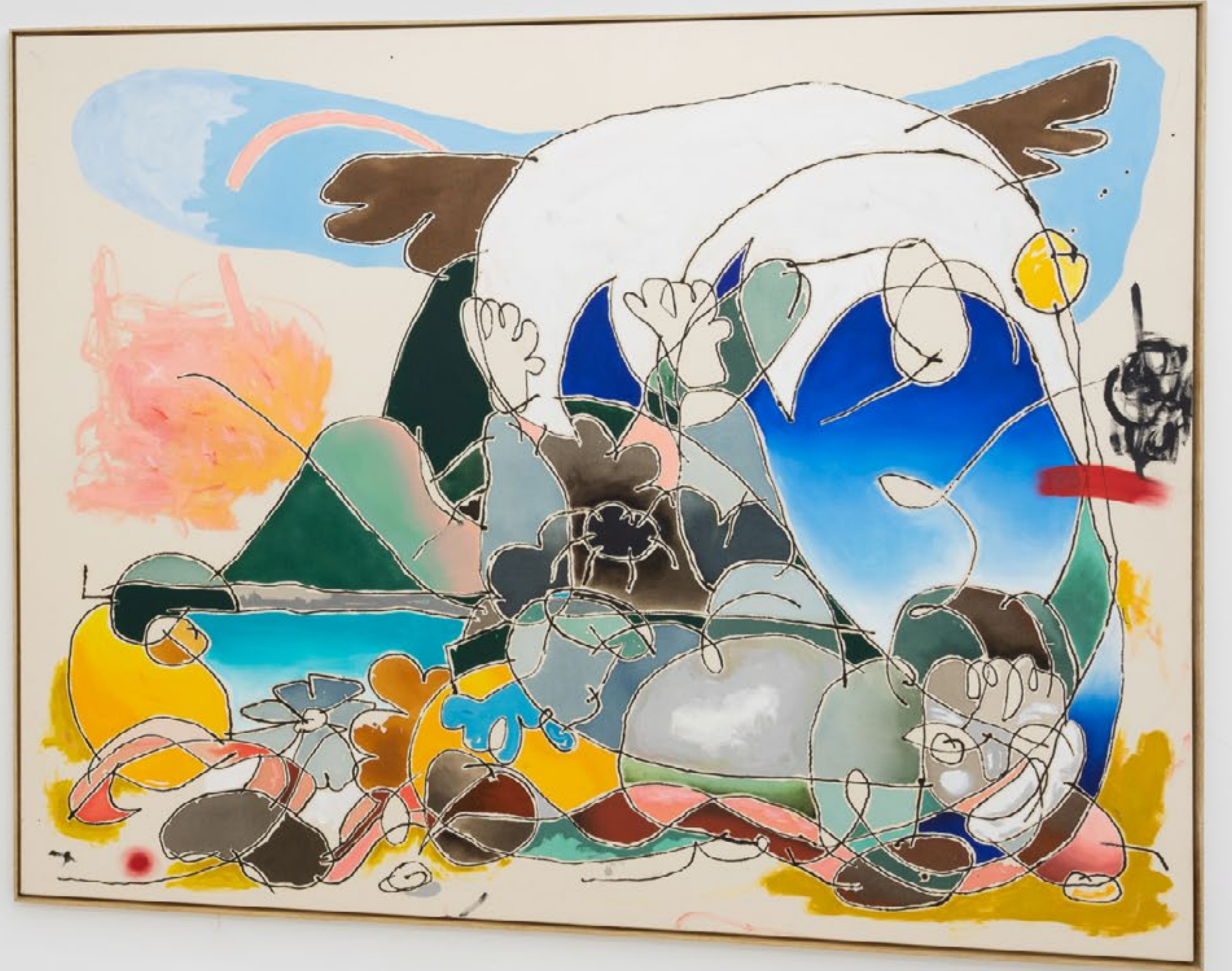
The title of the work refers to the former primeval continent of Pangea, a coherent land mass that encompassed all the present continents. Metaphorically, this is a state of the earth that returns the circumscription of humanity as a world community from its abstract level to a primeval basis: in the beginning, everything was one. The concept of a pangea ultima picks up the idea of the continent of unity and stands for the thesis that this state will return in the distant future. Consequently, the current form, the separation of the continental surfaces is only a temporary state - albeit of an expected duration of 450 million years.

The works of the drawing ensemble GET IN SHAPE GET COLOR, which bears the same title as the exhibition, all follow a similar formal structure that testifies to a changed attitude towards narrative pictorial elements. A division into three spatial planes can be discerned, giving the impression of a layered perspective: In the foreground, figures peel out of the juxtaposition of non-representational surfaces. The motifs remain implied, eluding clear attribution. A veil of the non-figurative envelops them. The middle ground of the picture is characterized by a color gradient of turquoise tones, which evokes associations with a body of water. The background is formed by dark green areas that merge into a color gradient of soft red tones. The combination of shapes and colors evokes memories of a shore landscape surrounded by sky. In contrast to the elements in the foreground, the water, landscape and sky are more clearly identifiable; despite their comparatively reduced mode of realization, they are far more representational than the dense concentration of color and form in the foreground of the picture. In this way, a reversal of perception occurs: while the foreground of the picture attracts attention, it nevertheless remains enigmatic and unapproachable. It bubbles with shapes and colors and at the same time eludes unambiguous legibility. Instead, it is the two-dimensional background that allows concrete images to emerge and offers support and orientation in contemplation.

Painting as a struggle for the right mixture of forms and colors, density and expanse, abstraction and figuration: Okujeni is walking a fine line here, because for him, finding a pictorial structure of order always involves breaking out of it posthaste. Thus it is also the interplay of unbridled and tamed, random and planned elements that make this painting so exciting. Or to put it in the words of Willem de Kooning, „You have to keep on the very edge of something, all the time, or the picture dies.“

Text: Julian Denzler





With his sculptural work, Nino Maaskola reflects on the most basic conditions of artistic production, a fundamental research which negotiates questions of formation in its relationship to aspects of process and materiality. At the same time, artistic production as production becomes thematic here. With it, the aspect of “work“ is called up as a social phenomenon: in its connection back to relations of production and economic structures, but also as a phenomenon that has become embedded in the globe itself and thus again evokes questions of materiality and production.

This becomes clear in the work series “Abschied von der Erde“ (“Farewell from Earth“), from which the exhibition presents two recent works. Here, the sculptural appears as an almost performative act: Maaskola’s attention is first and foremost directed at the tool that holds in suspension that which is otherwise the sculptor’s material – the found, unhewn stone. The gripping of the pliers thus shows a double: it shows the stone as a specific, physical object, brings it into attention in its raw foundness, and at the same time shows how this stone is put into use, thus setting this act of making itself in a scene. It is not so much a material as a potential object that is waiting to become something else, or in a classical reading: to become what has always already been hidden in it as form. Rather, this making presents itself in all its abysmal reality.

For what is being demonstrated here first of all refers to something that can be regarded as the reason for a technologically ever more efficient world and yet hardly ever comes into view itself: a systematically operated, industrially organized extraction of resources. Excavator, pliers, plow – these are only the most basic tools with which an instrumental reason digs deeper and deeper into the planet, turning, testing whatever can be used. Critical ores, rare earths are only the latest examples of the desires associated with them. The sculpture thus yields an ambivalent wonder at a Promethean efficacy, the memorable constellation that stone is able to keep itself suspended by a simple mechanical construction. As an example of such technical feasibility, its own material is at the same time withdrawn from it – and thus also from the grasp of possible sculptural intrusiveness.

The series becomes not only a self-reflection on the role of the artist as producer, who, in view of an almost unlimited technical feasibility, is left with the demonstration

of his own withdrawal as one essential consequence. Likewise, the attention is not solely shifted from the foregrounding of form to the reflection of structural framework conditions of production. Through this reflection, the sculptural distances itself from the functional logic it claims and directs it towards another, a non-identical, which is contained in it without being absorbed in the sober calculation of such logic, but rather opens it up, transcends it. This “non-identical“, all too provisionally described, again shows itself in almost disturbing beauty in the most recent “Mount Petrol“ works.

Flawless-iridescent color surfaces, partly tachistic-flickering and thus undoubtedly passed through the hand of the artist, but often of irritating similarity to marble, quartz, lapis lazuli, in short: to that which would otherwise be the starting point of a work, be it sculptural, be it artisanal. A paragon seems to suggest itself, in which the artist competes with the aesthetics of those natural materials that he would otherwise work on, admittedly just in such a way that he creates them first and foremost.

However, the question of how materiality and work are brought into a relationship here arises even more urgently. For what is stored in the panels is not only manual practical work. It is also the work of a chemical reaction, for which epoxy resin is used, a material that is essential for a whole series of technical, industrial, and engineering applications, but which in its unprocessed form has quite critical ecological properties. The series thus becomes a reflection on the structural conditions of the use of materials in artistic production, as well as in any production that is concerned with a techne. For this purpose it resorts to certain materials, but also to certain practices of appropriation and application, for which questions of ethics and ecological compatibility are becoming increasingly unavoidable. Yet, Maaskola’s use of epoxy resin, explicitly not for technical purposes but as a means of design, opens up the moment of work as well as that of play. For as much as this material-thermal reaction is subject to certain regularities, it is nevertheless not clamped into a predefined chain of purposes.

However, it is part of a constellation of different materials and forces, a constellation, in whose dynamically open execution, dependent on various parameters, only these different materials enter into a final form. The production process can thus be read as an analogy of self-organization and structure formation, as they are relevant as explanatory models in contemporary physics. In this way, there is not merely phenomenologically a similarity between materials that is produced by the series, but an analogy to principles of their production.

At the same time, the moment of play also determines the reception process. In the visual plasticity of the shimmering color surfaces with which close-up and distant views are constantly challenged, the series can be associated with that free but controlled play of the cognitive faculties, which Kant classically assumed to be constitutive for the judgment of taste. This, of course, does anything but settle questions about the work and materiality of the series. By leaving the questions of its own becoming in abeyance, "Mount Petrol" rather depicts the possibility of other horizons of thought. Staying with the trouble.

Text: Sebastian Hammerschmidt





WHO MADE MY CAT TWO DIMENSIONAL?

24.06.-28.07.23

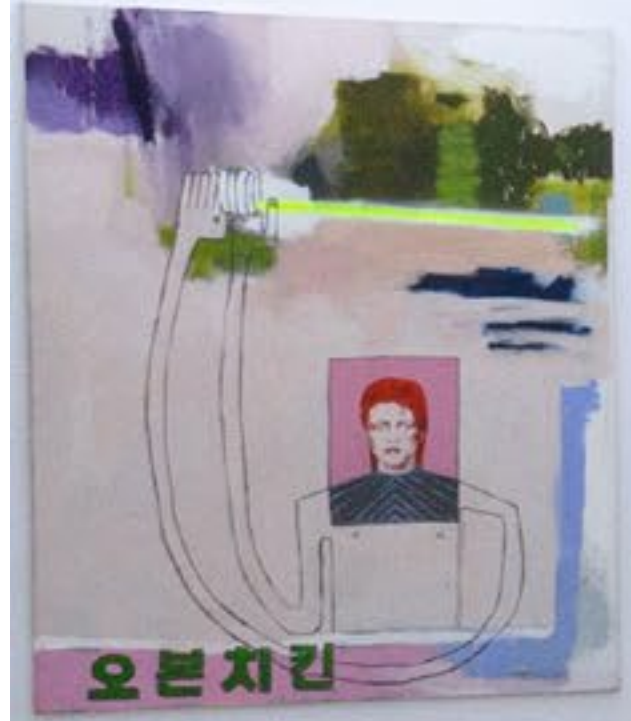
Antonia Freisburger, Stefanie Popp, Sophie Ullrich

Antonia Freisburger, born 1990 in Starnberg, lives and works in Düsseldorf. She studied under Eberhard Havekost at the Düsseldorf Art Academy. Antonia Freisburger creates surreal pictorial worlds that arise from her fascination with everything unknown in our universe. With painterly condensations of several layers, free-flowing surfaces and colorful, luminous, expanding forms, the artist attempts to approach the inexpressible with her sensitivity for the environment. We are immersed in a reality that appears fictitious, independent of time and place.

Sophie Ullrich was born in Geneva in 1990 and lives and works in Düsseldorf. Like Antonia Freisburger, she studied at the Düsseldorf Art Academy under Eberhard Havekost. She paints freely between figuration and abstraction and offers a sense of humor and human presence. Strong emotions intermingle as she embraces the nature of impulsivity, fostering an emotive intensity and supporting the ideology of never taking herself too seriously.

Stefanie Popp (*1974) studied at the Braunschweig University of Art under Walter Dahn. She lives and works in Cologne. The juxtaposition of contrasting elements - male and female, light and shadow, full and empty, sacred and profane - is a constant in Stefanie Popp's work. Even the titles of her works and exhibitions are language games that combine real words with ambiguous word creations and evoke contradictory concepts.





CALL ALEXANDER, HE KNOWS WHAT TO DO

29.04.-09.06.23

Stefan Jeske

Stefan Jeske's solo exhibition "Call Alexander, he knows what to do" brings together works from the last 4 years. Jeske has developed his very own painterly vocabulary, both in relation to concrete symbols such as bones, flowers or coins, which he paints in his own way, as well as a certain disposition that runs through his works. Although this mood is difficult to define, it consists of humorous and sometimes naïve, but also almost abysmal elements. The title of the exhibition refers to a work that is also included: "Call Alexander, he knows what to do" from 2019. In the painting, there is a large black knot on a brown background, surrounded by many hands pointing roughly in its direction. Everyone seems to have the solution, no one manages to untie it, but the discussion continues.





VOL 1

11.03.-21.04.23

Stefan Jeske, Nino Maaskola, Ulrich Okujeni,
Miriam Schmitz, Johanna Wagner

In his paintings, Stefan Jeske deals in a naive and satirical way with the contradictions, distractions and noise of our society and the emptiness that can arise from them. A stringent pictorial structure is very important to him; backgrounds, frames and layers are combined with his own symbolism. He creates magical places in his pictures which, despite their clarity, always allow for tension and multiple levels of meaning.

Nino Maaskola works with materials such as metal, stone, wood, epoxy resin and earth. By melting, casting and breaking, she creates sculptures and sometimes associated videos. The original characteristics of the materials become visible through the artistic working process. As in the broken metal castings, in which copper and aluminum collide freely and create crazy crystals that even the artist does not expect. Or stones that are clamped in tongs and float under their own weight. You get close to the everyday material.

In Ulrich Okujeni's drawings and paintings, free and formative gestures flow smoothly into one another. Some forms give the picture structure, others emphasize certain aspects of the picture. Superimpositions give his works depth and tension. Concrete motifs are sometimes more, sometimes less clearly recognizable, but are usually present, sometimes in the sense of art historical references. Okujeni's "escapist compositions" offer wide areas of association between abstraction and the concrete, between tradition and the present.

Music, poetry and fashion come together in the works of Miriam Schmitz. They form the basis of her sculptures, which are inspired by furniture and interior design. The different areas are in constant exchange with each other: a passage of text dictates the layering of a bucket seat, decorative elements become musical notes and form a composition on parquet flooring, furniture is clothed and equipped until it solidifies into a box full of memories, whereby objects for the body become the body itself. Expressive means of shaping life are the materials for her play with physiognomy, where localization and distortion create a sculptural counterpart with familiar parameters.

Johanna Wagner's artistic interests are diverse. They are often cross-genre and move between photography, performance, painting, sculpture, music and film. The human body in combination with certain materials often plays a major role as a starting point. These materials can be building materials such as insulating materials, foils, foams or classic artists' materials such as clay or canvas, but also "everyday materials" such as flour, fruit, face masks, sugar sprinkles or modeling clay.







PAW

Schützenstraße 37, 76137 Karlsruhe, Germany

www.pawgallery.de

info@pawgallery.de

+49 177 6837137