

Raphaela Simon

Bleibtreustraße 15/16, 10623 Berlin
2 September – 11 December 2021

Galerie Max Hetzler is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of four new paintings by **Raphaela Simon** at Bleibtreustraße 15/16, in Berlin. This is the artist's fourth solo presentation with the gallery.

In these new works, the evolution of Simon's visual language over the past few years is made evident. Where the early paintings showed abstract representations developing out of simple, often geometric forms, the recent works take a more figurative approach—pointing not towards realism, but to the essence of her subjects. Concise titles provided in German, the artist's mother tongue, invite personal associations while conveying the humorous undertones in Simon's work. Where the titles in earlier works had a rather symbolic character, they now appear to have a more descriptive role.

On view for the first time, the works presented include depictions of jewellery, a whip of cream and a mysterious *Blauer Käfig* (Blue Cage), 2020. The contrast between the glamorous and the ordinary, desire and unease, opens up an exciting perspective and demonstrates how Simon's fascination with elements of everyday life does not aim for literal representation. Instead, the artist creates novel painterly translations of chosen motifs through an intensive examination of composition, colour and form.

The new paintings mark a significant shift in terms of colour palette; the pastel and vibrant tones found in earlier works are replaced with more sombre, elegant hues. Black, grey, blue and white dominate the present exhibition, recalling the tradition of "grisaille". In this way, Simon emphasises the haptic quality of her multi-layered oil paintings more strongly than ever. *Großer Ring* (Big Ring), 2021 brings this to life with soft shapes rendered in rich nuances of grey. Abstract, cubist-like fields painted in luminous hues of deep blue, on the other hand, reflect the shimmering materiality of the sapphire in *Edelsteinring* (Gemstone Ring), 2021. The depicted objects extend across the entire canvas and, with their larger-than-life scale, renegotiate the relation between the viewer and the pictorial object, separating function from form.

The dark monochrome backdrops support this engagement, a formal technique that Simon has been using since 2019 and whose exploration is intensified in the works on view. Rich black and intense dark blue saturate the backgrounds of the paintings, reinforcing the focus on both the characteristics and possible connotations of the subjects. *Sahne* (Cream), 2021, a classic dessert embellishment, stands in a new light against the unfamiliar dark background. On the one hand, the depiction awakens associations, nostalgic memories like those from one's childhood. On the other, this common adornment becomes alienated, presented as a main protagonist, endowed with a sculptural quality in elaborate shades of white and grey. The result is an intriguing juxtaposition of the seemingly familiar—laced with memories—and a trace of the uncanny.

Far from the usual traditions of representation, Simon challenges the legacy of Pop Art figures, such as Claes Oldenburg (b. 1929), with her playful questioning of common notions of everyday life. Isolated against monochromatic, void-like backgrounds, the objects seem to take on a life of their own as they expand into the space of the viewer. Within the traditional medium of oil painting, they adopt



Raphaela Simon, *Großer Ring*, 2021
photo: def image

an almost portrait-like quality, inviting us to question the presence and essence of things—and therefore the subjective charge of meaning—in the material world.

Raphaela Simon (b. 1986, Villingen) lives and works in Berlin. Simon studied under Peter Doig at the Düsseldorf Art Academy and was part of Günther Förg's class at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts. Her work has been presented in solo and group exhibitions at Galerie Max Hetzler (2020-21, 2019, 2017 and 2016); Michael Werner Gallery, London (2020 and 2019); Victoria Miro Gallery (2018); TRAMPS/Michael Werner, New York (2017); Hannah Hoffman Gallery, Los Angeles (2016 and 2015); and TRAMPS, London (2014), among others.

Further exhibitions and events:

7 September – 11 December 2021

Rebecca Warren

Window Gallery, Goethestraße 2/3, 10623 Berlin

8 September – 11 December 2021

Rudolf Stingel

Schönheitssalon Omm

Kantstraße 139, 10623 Berlin

11 September – 30 October 2021

Louise Bonnet

Bathers

57, rue de Temple, 75004 Paris

14 September – 6 November 2021

Matthew Barney

After Ruby Ridge

Bleibtreustraße 45, 10623 Berlin

17 September – 30 October 2021

Julian Schnabel

Goethestraße 2/3, 10623 Berlin

30 September – 6 November 2021

Günther Förg

Constellations of Colour

41 Dover Street, W1S 4NS London

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