

GALERIE GISELA CAPITAIN

CHARLINE VON HEYL

November 17, 2021 - January 29, 2022

Galerie Gisela Capitain is delighted to announce its seventh solo exhibition of new paintings by German-born, US-based artist Charline von Heyl.

Considered one of the most important abstract painters of her generation, von Heyl has earned international acclaim for continually rethinking the possibilities of contemporary painting. Her cerebral yet deeply visceral artworks upend longstanding assumptions about composition, beauty, and narrative. For her new body of work, realized in 2020/2021, von Heyl is drawing inspiration from a vast array of sources - including literature, philosophy, pop culture, metaphysics and personal history. In her studios in New York and Marfa, Texas, von Heyl combines rigorous, process-based practice with the demand that each painting develops through the act of painting itself. Inspired by objects of her desire, she creates images that are seemingly familiar yet impossible to classify, offering, in her words, "a new image that stands for itself as fact."

Typical for von Heyl's work, the new paintings offer a variety of ways of thinking about the idea of an image as well as fearless stylistic diversity. "Von Heyl is primarily a painter of shallow space inflected with shapes and patterns of great variety and precision. [...] Her paintings are often quite different from one another; they fall into rough groupings based on certain formal devices or painting processes, like stripes, or loose, watery background, or all-over patterns, or translucent over-painting, or imagistic drawing."¹ Commonalities between the works exist, for instance, through the resumption of certain forms. The idea of shape and how a line constructs a shape is a recurring theme throughout von Heyl's practice. Working in layers, the artist creates complex compositions with multiple visual levels, shifting according to the spectator's point of view. This divergence in the levels of semantic meaning is sometimes accentuated by the use of oscillating colors. "How one applies color greatly affects how we perceive it", states David Salle and draws the attention on von Heyl's use of the color black. He calls her "a ferocious shape-maker and a pirate of the color black: black stripes, black smears, hard-edged black shapes, black charcoal lines and marks, black cutouts, negative shapes dropped out of black, black stars, arrows and darts; [...] Black, black, black – the element that gives the painting a feeling of confidence, authority, of being 'resolved.' [...] They make all of the other elements in the painting [...] cohere, and they give the paintings its attitude of fearlessness."² In von Heyl's paintings, the color black opens up the images, it enables the remaining colors to shine; as black graphic shapes they underline the painterly.

At times, content and form merge in von Heyl's paintings. Their titles add another layer of meaning – they capture an aspect of the image or convey a certain mood. Each painting in the show has its very own mood, and the paintings in turn create a mood among themselves. "Her pictures celebrate making the kinds of connections – between shapes, or between shapes and images, or between images and meaning – that we float through or that float through us all the time, but that we tend to disregard in everyday life".³

The spellbinding results invite viewers to explore a unique visual language that is both exuberant and insistent. "You emerge from the show feeling energized, with a sense that painting itself has been invigorated, liberated from long-held superstitions about what is or is not possible."⁴

¹ David Salle, *Houdini with a Brush*, in: The New York Review of Books, May 9, 2019 issue

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*

⁴ *ibid*

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Charline von Heyl was born in Germany in 1960, she lives and works in New York and Marfa, Texas. Institutional solo exhibitions include Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC, Dhondt-Dhaenens Museum, Deurle (2018-2019), Deichtorhallen Hamburg (2018), The Rose Art Museum, Waltham (2014), Bonner Kunstverein, Tate Liverpool, Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Nuremberg, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2012), Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2011-2012), Worcester Art Museum (2011), Le Consortium Centre d'Art Contemporain, Dijon (2009), The Ice Plant, Marfa (2008), Dallas Museum of Art (2005) and Wiener Secession, Vienna (2004).