

# KÖNIG GALERIE

## MONA ARDELEANU | POLYMORPH

KÖNIG GALERIE | 26 NOVEMBER 2022 – 08 JANUARY 2023

KÖNIG GALERIE is pleased to present POLYMORPH, an exhibition of new works by the Stuttgart-based painter, Mona Ardeleanu. For this show, Ardeleanu has created twelve oil on canvas works, all in the same dimensions, oriented vertically, and finished with a smooth varnish that grants them a glossy exterior that belies their otherworldly compositions. As source material, Ardeleanu employs fragments of patterns, textiles, colours, and shapes that she first sketches and then finishes through an organic, additive process of painting. This expands the initial drawing into an image of ever-greater complexity and detail, which hover like veils over their backgrounds, hanging in the space of the painted picture like ornaments adorning a regal edifice.

It is not uncommon for Ardeleanu's paintings to recall faces or other vaguely recognizable forms: the tendency to rationalize the collaged elements into a coherent gestalt feels almost inescapable, underscored by the fact that each of the twelve canvases are given first names – Shelly, Malva, Abul, etc. Upon closer inspection, each painting's ornate character creates a maze-like infinity of detail that blurs the larger whole and provides entry into a pictorial handling of space all its own. AYLÄ, 2022 (all works 2022), puts shimmering, beaded strands of colour on top of a jet-black backdrop in the form of a girl's face, complete with pigtails. In BRUNO, a hairy scarf forms the arms of what appears to be a grizzly bear, whose sharp claws can be made out below the intersection of the scarf's lengths. The mien is anything but frightening, however, as two goofy eyes stare back at their viewers, absences made present within the fabric of the pelt appendages.

Pareidolia is the name given to the uncanny effect in which vision imposes an artificial order or pattern on otherwise random objects or things in the world, and one common symptom of this condition is to see faces everywhere, in everything. Ardeleanu's works anticipate pareidolia, performing and registering the effect with an exactness and attention to detail carried to such a degree that nearly every act of looking could become an instance of recognizing order where there is, in fact, none. POLYMORPH pre-empts the tendency to make random things into identifiable representations, and the awareness of this fact leaves viewers with a direct encounter with their own desire: to see as if through a process of recognition. One could run wild with the possibilities of such an awareness, from facial recognition software to surveillance to dating apps; it is endless, really. But Ardeleanu's attention to the minutiae of representation suggests something else. That, in the language of painting, there is, strictly speaking, no requirement to paint what one sees, no secret contract that guarantees that what exists on the surface of the canvas is somehow magically connected to a "real" thing out there in the world. Space, depth, and pattern belong more concretely to Ardeleanu's paintings than perhaps anywhere else – full of life and yet devoid of any sleight of hand.

Ardeleanu emphatically claims that her paintings are not the result of art historical inspiration or Old Master forbearers. For her, graphic novels, comic books, and the directness of drawing practices have served more influential roles. The compositional mashups that make up POLYMORPH are connected to making

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### EXHIBITIONS

ALICE ANDERSON  
Biophilia  
KÖNIG GALERIE  
26.11.2022 – 08.01.2022

ON KAWARA, PETER DREHER  
& ALICJA KWADE  
Measure by Measure  
KÖNIG SEOUL | 11.11 – 23.12.2022

MICHAEL SAILSTORFER  
KÖNIG GALERIE  
20.01. – 05.03.2023

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Tue – Sat 11 AM – 6 PM  
Sun 12 PM – 6 PM (08.01.2023)

something completely imaginary, unreal, find a space within the confines of the painted support, not as a mirror of reality, but as a dissection of dependent parts into the elements that belong exclusively to the two-dimensional world as it is, right before one's eyes.

Mona Ardeleanu (b. 1984 in Lörrach, Germany) lives and works in Stuttgart. She studied under Alexander Roob, Frank Ackermann, Daniel Richter, and Karin Kneffel at the Staatlichen Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Stuttgart, Karlsruhe, Vienna, and Munich respectively. Building images in layers, Ardeleanu takes a sculptural approach to her paintings, using the visual vocabulary of the everyday to produce hyper-real objects with a mysterious, intangible quality. Her detailed renderings seem to be collaged bits of historical vessels and utensils, presented on a striking, contrasted backgrounds like an archaeological specimen never before seen.

Ardeleanu's work has been featured in numerous institutional shows, including "Now! Younger Painting in Germany", Deichtorhallen, Hamburg (2020); the Marta Herford Museum, Herford, Germany (2018, 2015); Kunsthalle Nuremberg, Germany (2018); and the Stuttgart Art Museum, Stuttgart (2013). Her artworks are part of the collection of the State of Baden-Württemberg, the Stuttgart Art Museum, the Marta Herford Collection, and the Würth Collection. Her latest solo shows include exhibitions with KÖNIG Galerie Berlin (2020) and KÖNIG London (2022). Ardeleanu will open her next solo exhibition in the St Agnes | NAVE at KÖNIG Berlin in November 2022, the largest show of her work to date.

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